



PRIVATE SUITE



This Issue

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Agora Road and Vaporwave websites

OWNING PIXELS:

What Our Neopets Taught Us

GAME REVIEW: 198X

Digital Futures:

A Look at Thundercloud

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Private Suite Magazine 14.0 Public Release

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Reviews



Fiction



Features



ISSUE 14

[SEPT 2020]

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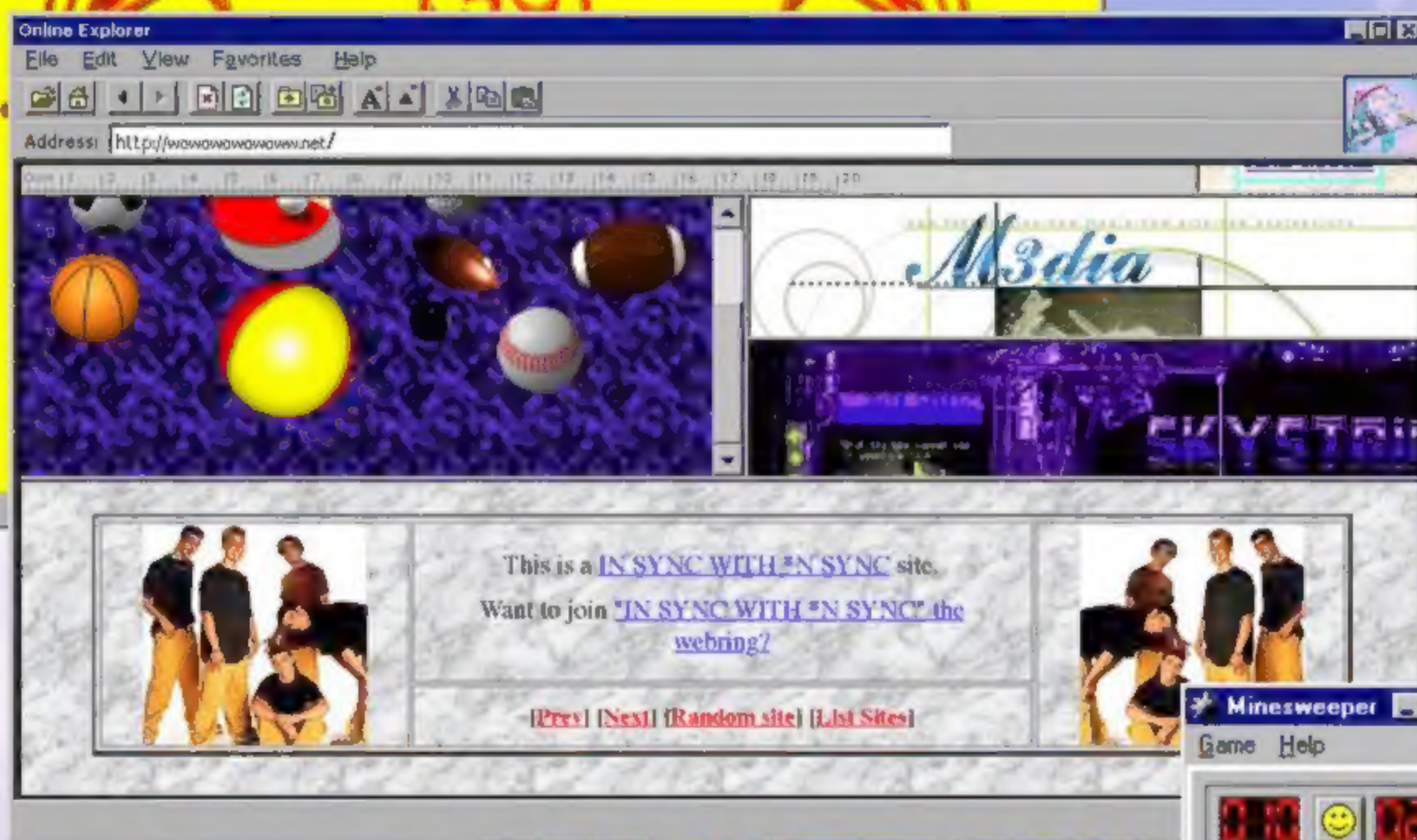
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Letter from a netizen

As a millennial always a few years behind the cutting edge, I grew up amid the sound of dial-up modems and Flash cartoons, Napster downloads that sometimes took days, and single-digit megapixels delivered in choppy streams. Even with the limitations of '90s-era technology and speeds, the "old web" was bursting with color and sound, and the ardor of millions of souls able to connect and express their passions in a way the world had never seen. Despite spending much of my childhood diving deep into the wellsprings of the world wide web and experiencing the wonders of a pre-corporate internet, I could never have imagined it would support an entire ecosystem of dazzling spectacles and their creators the way it has done in 2020.

This issue arrives at the end of what may be the most online summer of the century. Under the immense pressures of civil unrest, economic instability, and pandemic, the vaporwave community has done more than weather the storm. It has blossomed, a jungle thick with countless unique blooms fresh from monsoon rains, offering up its bounty. It's helped raise thousands of dollars for varied causes — from revenue sharing sales and livestreamed concerts supporting artists facing months of cancelled performances to benefit shows honoring the Black Lives Matter movement and providing direct aid to the brave people battling inequality and police brutality in protests

around the world and charity streams that support the real people behind the aliases who toil at every level of production as the heartbeat of the vaporwave movement publishing art and music.

We are twinkles of cyberpunk fantasy made real, in a blanket of deep but finite darkness, moving in unison to an online-only existence, knowing it is both necessary and temporary. And, just like summer, no matter how cold it gets, we'll return again and shine brighter than ever IRL.

I adore vaporwave because it brings back my sense of childhood wonder and creativity. It's a special nostalgia, beyond the Windows 95 motifs and low-res, rose-tinted aesthetic which inspires and encourages creation and evolution, and combines the best of the old and new internet frontiers. Issue 14 is dedicated to the spirit of the 90s web and everyone in our community who keeps it burning.

cerulea_d.lux
Lead Editor



! 我們歡迎你

等, (特別介紹: 師生關係之

的第一頁個

(遊戲的第二個家

家第1次光臨本站

Rapidfires



Blurred Aspect by Diskette Park



Diskette Park's aptly-titled *Blurred Aspect* muddles the boundaries between each track, masking each sound in a shimmer of reverb. A thread of haziness is strung about the album while entwined vocals lead and lament in suppressed melancholy, each reminiscent of a softer, simpler time. A confident performance of the slushwave subgenre, *Blurred Aspect* makes for a wistful, shiny release, perfect for cooling down after a warm summer day.

stroligy

Donald McDonald by Food Court



From the echoing corridors of a dead retail supercenter comes melodic mallsoft perfect for any high-calorie, low-fidelity diet. Each track is bite-sized yet packed with addictively flavorful loops. With a cover that looks like a frame from a lost advertising reel and the haunting instrumentals to match, *Food Court* is the soundtrack to a once bustling hub of decadent consumption, now faded to a wasteland of empty paper bags and crumpled wrappers.

DJ Nonn

Neon Palace Mall by Polycorp Interactive



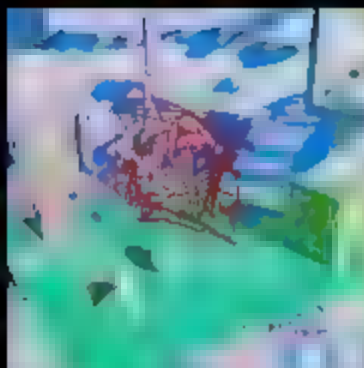
Polycorp Interactive delivers a classic-sounding mallsoft album that hits all the right notes. With the gentle roar of consumers flitting hither and thither as a baseline, some peaceful lounge-style muzak is piped right into your dreams. Clocking in at a leisurely 67 minutes, the album covers all its bases. If you're looking for a soundtrack to peruse stores, eat at the food court, or anything in between, *Neon Palace Mall* has you covered.

gbanas92

*We dig around the internet
so you don't have to*

Dezonator

by Gross Machine



With intricate layers and syncopation evocative of strange and complex machinery, *Gross Machine* takes you on a journey through sharp, mathematical asymmetries. It simultaneously appeals to lovers of both IDM and vaportrap, like an underground club for AIs only.

DJ Nonn

Glamour

by Paradise of Yesterday

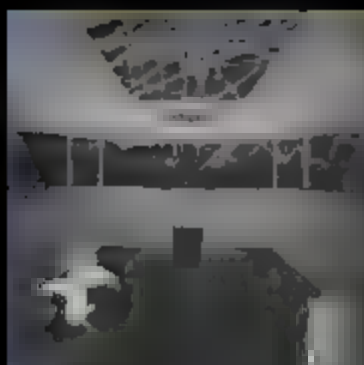


A jammin' non-stop thrillride of future funk-enriched beauty. The grooves start right away and don't let up as you cruise your way through 40 minutes of joyous music. Bringing the best elements of outrun and future funk together, Paradise of Yesterday have dropped one of their best releases to date on an unsuspecting world. If this album isn't enough to convince Sega to at long last revive their legendary racer series, then nothing is. The album's immutable joy arises from its cavalcade of memorable melodic moments.

gbanas92

EPIPHANY SKYSPACE

by NEW MEXICAN STARGAZERS



Expansive *EPIPHANY SKYSPACE* sends listeners to a state of higher consciousness. Eerie, forlorn instrumentation crowds each delightfully enigmatic track, as if to suspend each in space, drifting aimlessly. With noisy, trance-like synths, warm fuzz, and sporadic, delayed vocal bits occupying the musical foreground, NEW MEXICAN STARGAZERS' latest release makes for a quaint addition to the group's sprawling lo-fi discography.

stroligy



RED CAP ENERGY
БЫХАНА

Red Cap Energy is the police sketch version of nu metal, a distorted superorganism of the sonic and visual atmospheres codifying the long-gone genre. Red Cap Energy handles its subject the same as classic vaporwave handles smooth jazz and '80s funk.

Nu metal was characterized by the constant use of distorted guitars, moderate hip-hop influences, and blunt, often aggressive lyrics. As far as that emulation goes, Red Cap Energy hits the mark perfectly, to the point where you could almost give the album outright to present day fans of bands like Korn, Linkin Park, or System Of A Down. However, the songs are incredibly short and to the point, with no track lasting longer than a couple minutes and sampled fractions of choruses becoming whole songs.

The album's songs are incredibly short, most clocking in at a minute on average, with a few ("buttime," "travisandbobhead," the beginning and ending, respectively) lasting not even twenty seconds. Further compounding the brevity is the fact that there are about thirteen songs on the album, including the two that don't reach twenty seconds. However, since the songs are so short, the album communicates the tone and feelings of the songs as clearly as it needs to, and nothing gets in the way of the theme and hooks of the songs. The album is all direct communication in both style and message.

The tracks are difficult for me to listen to on their own, with many starting and stopping almost abruptly and not being easily loopable without awkward fades. However, when the tracks are put together, these fades serve a purpose. Not so much a timeline of nu metal's era in the spotlight, but the layers of an onion peeled back. The music is made in its entirety by clipping samples from the best-remembered nu metal, with the distortion applied blending well into the distortion already used on the original songs. The added effects and splices on tracks like "go away" don't feel like lazy filters added to disguise theft, but like a genuine addition to the overproduction of nu metal on the whole.

At the bottom of Red Cap Energy's Bandcamp page is a link to an article by MEL Magazine entitled "Nu Metal Tried To Warn Us About Male Rage. But Instead We Laughed At Their Masks," something of a decoder ring to the major concepts and themes on the album. (As an aside, the article is pretty well-written and I'd recommend it without the context of explaining a vapor release.) I wasn't around to see anything but the tail end of the last wave of "butt rock," but I've always had a soft spot for this sort of music.

As for my personal opinion on the album, I like the novelty of vapor-ified nu metal and the willingness to see the gravity in something far too many can't take seriously. I'm not the specific target audience nor has this album especially resonated with me. But I can't bring myself to call this one "average" or "good, not great" — not when a vapor release actually tries to do things seriously. I don't



Vapor-wares: Episode III: Revenge of the Vapor

The presentation of a cassette or record can go a long way to enhancing the aesthetics of the vaporwave listening experience. So in the third installment of this new series, we'll share some of our favorite physical releases from the past few months (or even further back). Through these two releases we have highlighted a couple standouts amidst the vast cornucopia of visual and physical delights sure to please any collector. And if you're reading this thinking "but the last issue had Episode I," you would be correct! Episode II was released digitally on our website as part of the Digital Summer festivities!

Thank you for returning to Vapor-wares.

Bizarre Bazaar by Limousine

Talk about colorful! Limousine's latest mallsoft release packs one of the most infectiously colorful album covers to date. The cover art by *l u n i t a s* ルニタス brilliantly captures both the essence of Limousine's incredibly imagined mall and the artist's signature look. Another nice little touch that really helps sell the beauty of the whole package is the cassette case itself as, instead of a traditional clear back, it has a translucent baby blue/seafoam green look which really helps everything to pop that extra little bit. This batch also included cassettes with yellow tapes, but we're rather partial to the blue one. Either way, it's a stunning case for a stunning album. -gbanas92



Floral Shoppe (フローラルの専門店) by MACプラス (Macintosh Plus) | Vektroid

Probably the most important album in vaporwave. Is there a medium this album hasn't been recorded onto!? I present to you an unofficial MiniDisc of MACプラス's フローラルの専門店 (Floral Shoppe), brought to you by a collaborative effort between Deluxe Vaporwave Cassettes and VWA. The pad printing quality on this release is incredibly good ([link to full-size image here](#)), with a 5 panel front/back j-card insert and full album text on the spines. The back of the MD is complete with a rose garden blood spatter and the watchful album emblem, the eye. Limited to only 50, this will be one of the rarer speciality releases for this record. -IndyAdvant



198X

By: **semioticrobotic**

"I guess I was just looking for anything that could make my heart skip a beat again," says the dejected, stargazing star of 198X, a video game about the transportive power of video games. Stockholm-based Hi-Bit Studios' pixelated peep into the video arcade's glory days might not cause serious gamers any arrhythmia, but it certainly will make vaporwave fans swoon.

Let's dispense with the story. The whole thing knows it's so archetypal that it doesn't even feign ingenuity. Players control Kid, a teenager from Suburbia, a town just outside City. In the year 198X, Kid spends his nights "up in my room [...] counting tail lights on the highway," dreaming about life in a metropolis oversaturated in fluorescent purples and pinks. Kid is Angry. Kid is Disillusioned. His motivation for being so is tenuous at best—something about "this thing with Dad"—but, truly, it's not important (at least not in this installment; the studio promises a sequel that will likely flesh it out).

More important is the finesse of the game's nostalgia-delivery mechanisms. Eventually, Kid does find an outlet for his malaise in a video arcade tucked in the basement of a long-abandoned warehouse—a sanctum full of "the coolest uncool people I had ever seen," as Kid puts it. Night after rainy night, players join Kid in that smokey place, observe him approach arcade machines with desperate purpose and budding hope. 198X effectively vacillates between narrative perspectives when he does, asking players to take up Kid's position and play what he's playing: a beat-'em-up and a shoot-'em-up, an Outrun-style racer, a Shinobi-esque platformer, and a 3D dungeon crawler. Each one is impeccably rendered, distilling the mechanics that make its respective genre so engrossing. And each features a perfectly suited soundtrack.

So you're playing a video game about a kid playing video games. Or rather, you're playing a video game as a kid playing video games. The game's ongoing double-shift in perspective—from third-person cutscenes to first-person gameplay and back again, from distant observer to embodied co-controller—is the game's motor. That motor never really propels players anywhere, however. 198X never finishes anything. Don't expect the story, such as it is, to resolve, and don't expect to "beat" any of those arcade machines. 198X's obstacles aren't there to be beaten, to serve your naive desire for closure. Closure would mean Kid had Gotten Over It—and that he'd need to go home. Instead, you're meant to luxuriate in these microworlds, to let them carry you away, again and again. The success of the game is in the perpetual playing.

That's really what makes 198X an excellent vaporgame—to say nothing of its pitch-perfect color palette and period-appropriate graphics. This game about Kid in Suburbia outside City flaunts its self-awareness, wears it proudly. But it's never parodic. It's never sarcastic. What makes the game so compelling is its downright earnestness. Like any vaporwave cassette, it unspools without pretense or pretension. 198X has Something To Say. And it's ruthless about saying it.

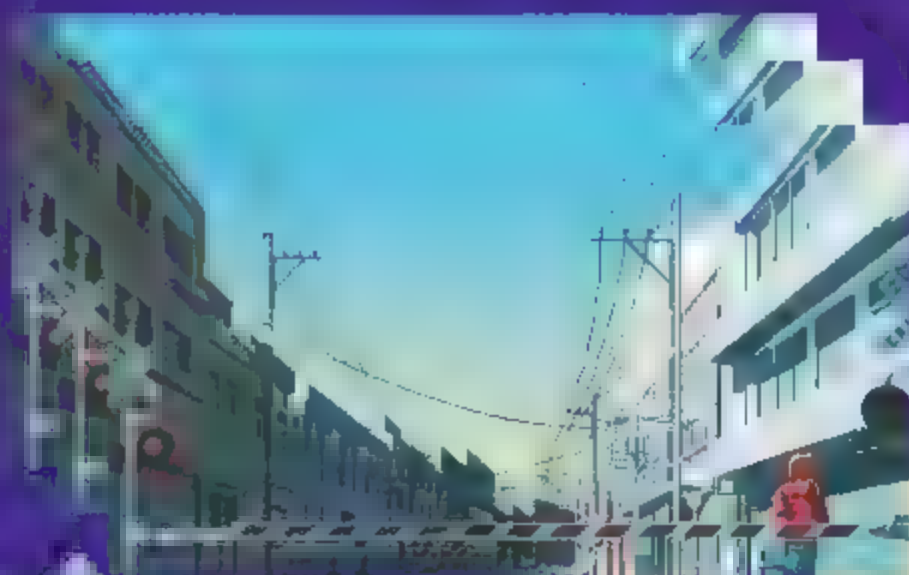
In fact, it says the most when it's not saying anything at all—when Kid's wistful voiceovers have quieted and the pace of play has slowed. Gameplay dissolves into cutscene without warning or heed, and the screen darkens just a beat longer than customary. Pitch black, silent and blank, the screen of my Nintendo Switch becomes a mirror, and I catch my reflection on its glossy surface—somewhat bemused, wholly captivated, fresh from my immersion in Kid's immersion in the machine. Fantastic dances of light extinguished, confronted once again with my own utter ordinariness, that's when I really understand this Kid.

website:

<https://198xthegame.com/>

launch trailer

<https://youtu.be/AvbKpwm6mSM>



Nitewind

– Nite Tapes Deluxe

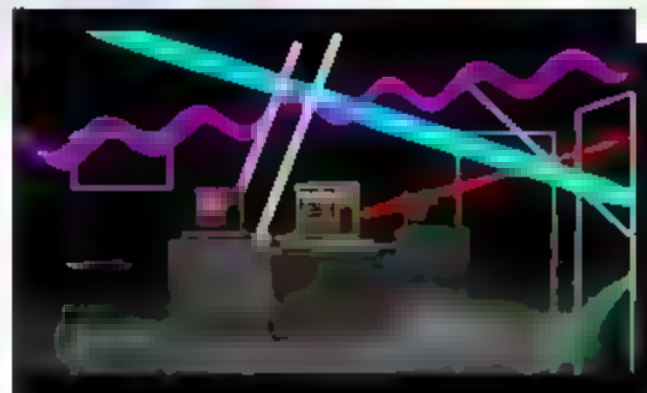
Writer: STROLIGY

As a long summer day simmers into a cool evening glow, Nitewind's latest release *Nite Tapes Deluxe* (an expansion of Nitewind's 2019 EP-version release of the same name) lovingly reminisces on the pleasures of life, willfully evoking the retro, the nostalgic, and the delightfully whimsical with each consecutive track. At first glance (or listen), *Nite Tapes* seems to follow the natural tendencies such a diverse genre generally displays: a shiny introductory presentation of swirling dreaminess, a dizzying flight into refined synth madness, and an anticipated (but poignant) finale. A remarkably appealing arrangement of sonic satisfaction, *Nite Tapes Deluxe* is instrumental retrowave in its prime.

Opener "Skyline" leads ■ dreamy synth trail, followed with the rise and fall of airy synth arpeggios, all atop a wobbly bass bounce. The track fades to completion, soon to be met with "Nite Visions," a dazzling ascent into ■ bright, retro-fied synthscape. Bouncy leads, glitzy arpeggios, and atmospheric risers abound—the stuff of warm summer days and aimless midnight drives. Wafts

of airy ambience and elegant arps grace "React," an expectantly slower, smoother track following a heavier swell of synthesized romance. Bubbly "Waveform Select" relies on distinctively brassier synths and hazy overtones veiled in a cool, blue aura. In aptly-named "Ambient Occlusion," droning synths obscure the track before melting away in near-psychedelic haziness. Groovy "1998," with front-and-center percussion and brooding, hypnotic synthwork, makes room for an exceptionally '80s-inspired beat—a track best fit for that nightclub down the street. Glistening "Poly Transpose" bathes in reverb, lathers in fuzzy guitar plucks, and is dressed in the stars of ■ far-off galaxy under a moonlit sky. Listening to closer "Lonely Osc" feels as if one has fortuitously tuned into ■ synthesized back-and-forth, a conversation in Nitewind's rich sonic palette.

Nite Tapes Deluxe draws heavily from the familiar '80s aesthetic. In the music video for "Nite Visions," for example, ■ faceless figure takes ■ seemingly eternal journey (a trip, if you will) into the retrosphere—or



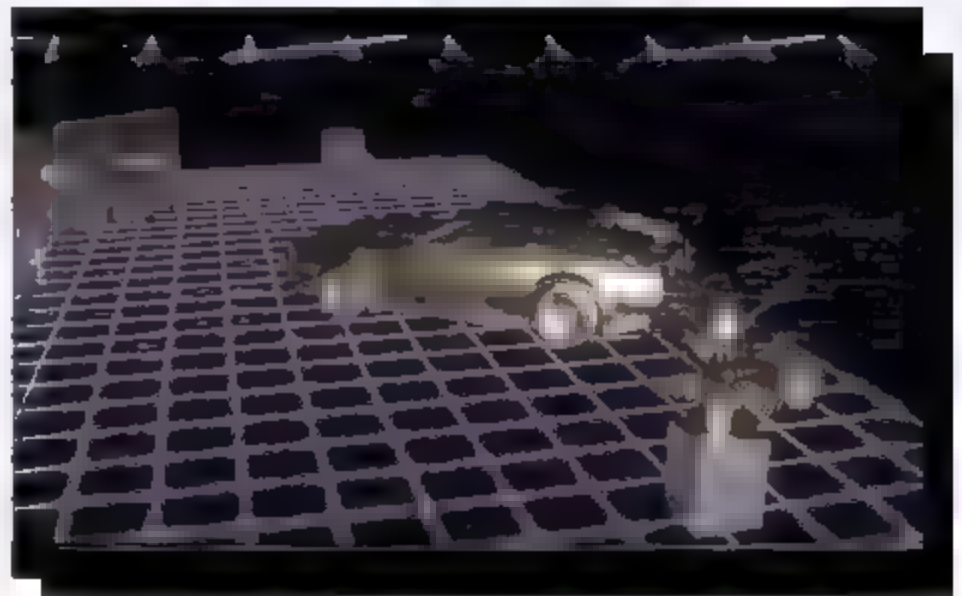
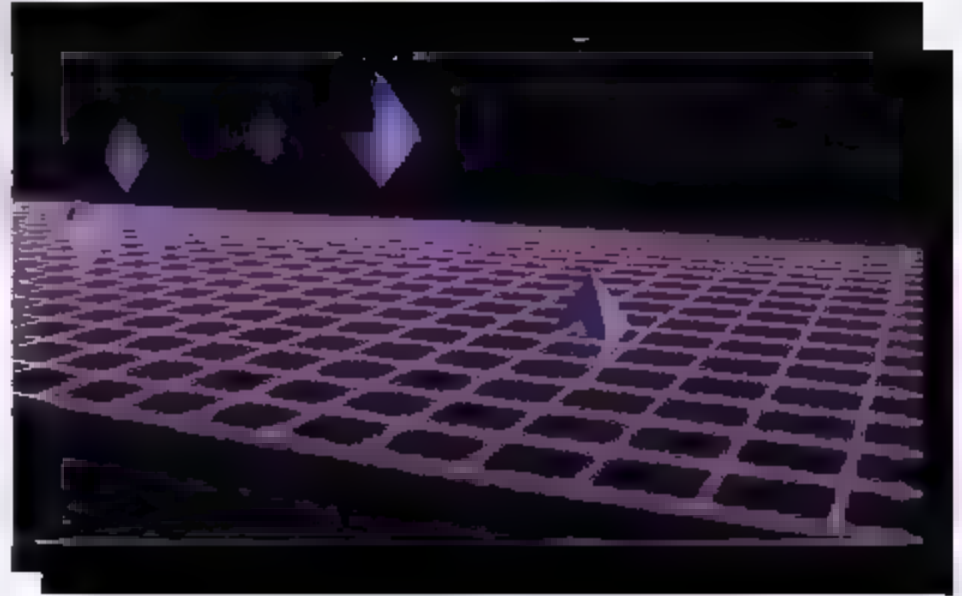
Scenes from experimental film artist John Reinke's music video for "Nite Visions".

perhaps simply within the confines of a high school computer lab—while VHS-like screen distortions adorn the scenery. Though predominantly dim, bursts of pastel- and neon-colored abstractions glide into view. Such surrealistic visuals elicit a sort of transportive, otherworldly feel, as if to send viewers off into an alternate dimension of Nitewind's making.

Likewise, the music video for "Lonely Osc" (created by vaporwave notable FM Skyline) presents a shimmering array of characteristically nostalgic objects; the rotary phone, the Macintosh, VHS cassette tapes, and even the obligatory house plant make an appearance. Meanwhile, manic diamonds command the proverbial dancefloor (better yet, the dancegrid) as the viewer soars almost aimlessly through space. The video presents itself in such a way that it mimics a time loop (or rather a tear in the fabric of time) by way of repeating identical scenes, only to fade away like the "shrinking" of a vintage television screen powering down.

While visually reminiscent of the '80s in its use of bright colors, geometric consistency, and purposeful display imperfections, Nitewind's sonic capabilities are as on-par with his deliberation in aesthetics. Elaborately textured synthwork and the perpetually warm, glowy atmosphere of each track closely parallel the retrowave synth-pop of the '80s—all the while managing without the slightest bit of vocal presence. Notwithstanding a direct human quality, each track breathes as if in accordance with the listener's own gamut of emotions: "Skyline" gives Nitewind listeners a warm welcome and establishes the groundwork which *Nite Tapes Deluxe* will continue to build upon henceforth, mirroring the excitement and enthusiasm of listening to Nite Tapes for the very first time. "Nite Visions" dips into a bit of flirty fun while listeners grow familiar with the sights and sounds before them; "React" lulls listeners in a whirl of serenity, those of which likely have yet to process the previous tracks (and so on).

Sitting at a mere eight tracks, Nitewinds' collective artistic efforts combine surrealistic imagery with a modern interpretation of typical retro sonicism to form an unusually idyllic, sweet-sounding dreamland fantasy. Defined largely by its heavy stylistic dependence on (or resemblance to) the quintessential '80s aesthetic, *Nite Tapes Deluxe* takes full advantage of dreamy, fuzzed synths, bright imagery, and lo-fi production. When traditional vintage memorabilia and grainy textures align with abstract, futuristic visualizations of incredible vibrancy, the result is a neatly-crafted composition of retrowave in its purest, truest form.



Scenes from "Lonely Osc".

How
Muchinglet



Monsters

review by:

gbanas92

Odds are, if you think of popular synthwave artists, one of the first ones to pop into your head will be The Midnight. With two massively successful albums to their name alongside a couple of EPs, their third album was announced to quite a bit of hype. With a bevy of successful releases behind them, it comes time to look ahead to *Monsters* which, much like their prior releases, is an absolute triumph.

The album opens to the wonderful, ear-piercing noises of a dial-up internet connection – a fitting subject given the theme of this issue – before heading into the first track proper, "America Online." A driving, outrun-style synth beat blends seamlessly with some summery synthesized woodwinds; at this point, frankly, we're already hooked before the vocals even kick in. The vocoded lyrics add another layer to the number, and the end result is a downright brilliant opening track. The real star is honestly the woodwinds which add such a warm, cheery texture to the track and help establish the level of quality we can expect from the release.

Next up on the album is "Dance With Somebody," offering up a more traditional '80s style synthpop track that has an infectious chorus. The

song says "Life's too short to dance by yourself. Think you should dance with somebody," but that advice is going to be awfully hard to take if you're listening to the song alone. As if the chorus wasn't already enough, a killer saxophone bridge really seals the deal. "Seventeen" follows this up with a more somber tone that veers close to being a ballad but doesn't quite tip over all the way. Rather, it sits precipitously somewhere between a trap song and a love song, making for a rather fascinating juxtaposition of two sounds that may appear at first incongruous but ultimately blend surprisingly well.

This leads to "Dream Away" which retains the trap-sounding beat but also brings back that woodwind sound from "America Online," resulting in a song readymade for the radio, including yet another phenomenal chorus. If all of these great choruses are tiring you out, fret not. "The Search For Ecco" comes in, offering an instrumental cooldown. A wonderfully relaxing track that hits just the right mix of tropical and lullaby, "Ecco" offers a great reprieve from all the high energy before we get back into the thick of things.



"Prom Night" starts the next leg of the album with some more grooves for the dance-inclined and some powerful group vocals to close the track out that lend the song an optimistic, inspirational edge that it might otherwise have lacked. With nary ■ moment to breathe, we enter into "Fire In The Sky" which has ■ bonkers bass line and a crazy

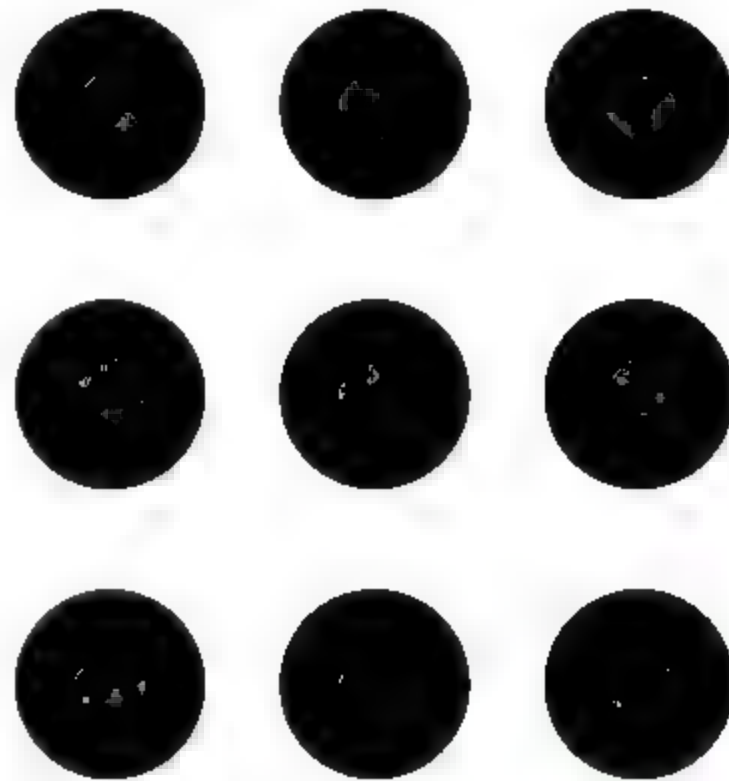
pitch shifted chorus that is very likely to stick with you well after the album's finished up. Next on the block, we have the title track, "Monsters," ■ song that carries a fantastic beat ready-made for ■ VR title like Beat Saber. Featuring a guest appearance by Jupiter Winter on vocals, "Monsters" proves to be one of the standouts on an album filled to the brim

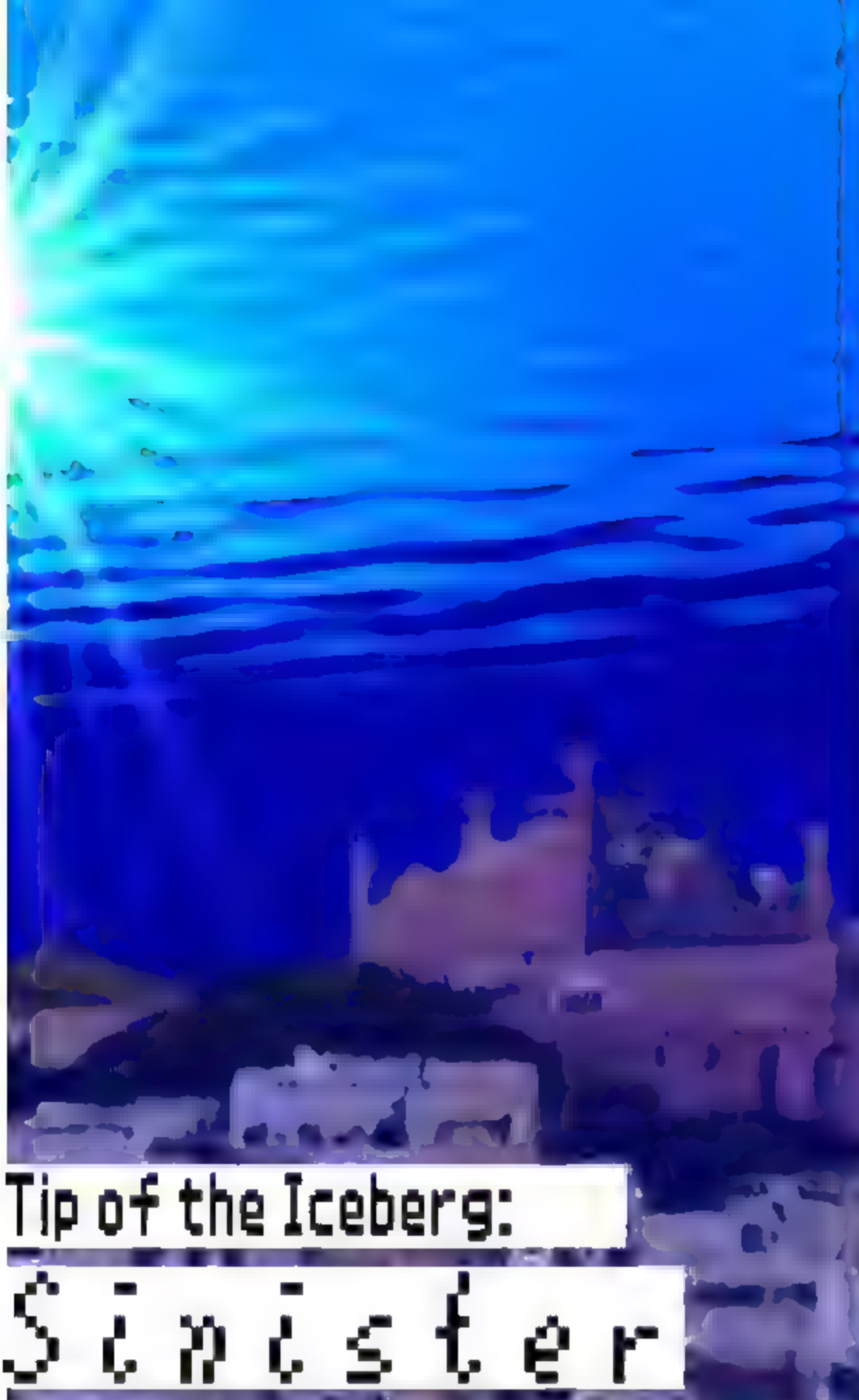
already with great music. Not content to stay within ■ narrow field of genres, "Helvetica" opens with ■ melody straight out of ■ prog rock album, mixed with something closest in sound to whale song. This is the second instrumental track on the album and offers another "cool down" of sorts before we enter the home stretch.

"Brooklyn" offers another softer track to even things out a bit. Guitar factors in a little more heavily than anywhere else on the album, and the result is one of the prettiest tracks on *Monsters*. Of particular note is the fact that the tone is a bit more somber than we'd have expected. Not to be outdone, next up is "Deep Blue" which has the most impressive vocal performance on the album with a rhythm that caught us off guard on first listen, offering something that stands way out, especially since it's paired with more ominous, darker synths. It gives the track a creepy, looming quality. Something ominous and unspeakably threatening hangs around at the fringes of this one. All the more fitting that the next track, "Night Skies" – presumably titled after Steven Spielberg's unmade horror film that would eventually become *E.T.* and, depending who you ask, *Poltergeist* as well – is next up. This one too has an even creepier sound with some ominous synth work and more vocoder work. It's worth noting that the vocals here blend with the background, further buried in the mix, which brings the aforementioned looming darkness creeping forward a bit more.

Having successfully weathered the storm, though, we are rewarded with "City Dreams (Interlude)" and the closer "Last Train" which both help bring things back to a stereotypical suburban neighborhood from the '80s movie of your choice. Will you ever be able to take that train and escape your neighborhood? Do you even want to? If this album's anything to go by, the answer is a no. Let's just wait here for a little while. See what happens.

All in all, The Midnight's latest is, simply put, great. *Monsters* is filled to the brim with great songs, and the album is cleverly structured allowing the different sounds on display to get the spotlight they deserve. For fans of the band, and the genre at large, we've got another classic to add to the list.





Tip of the Iceberg:
Sinister

SUPER MARIO 64

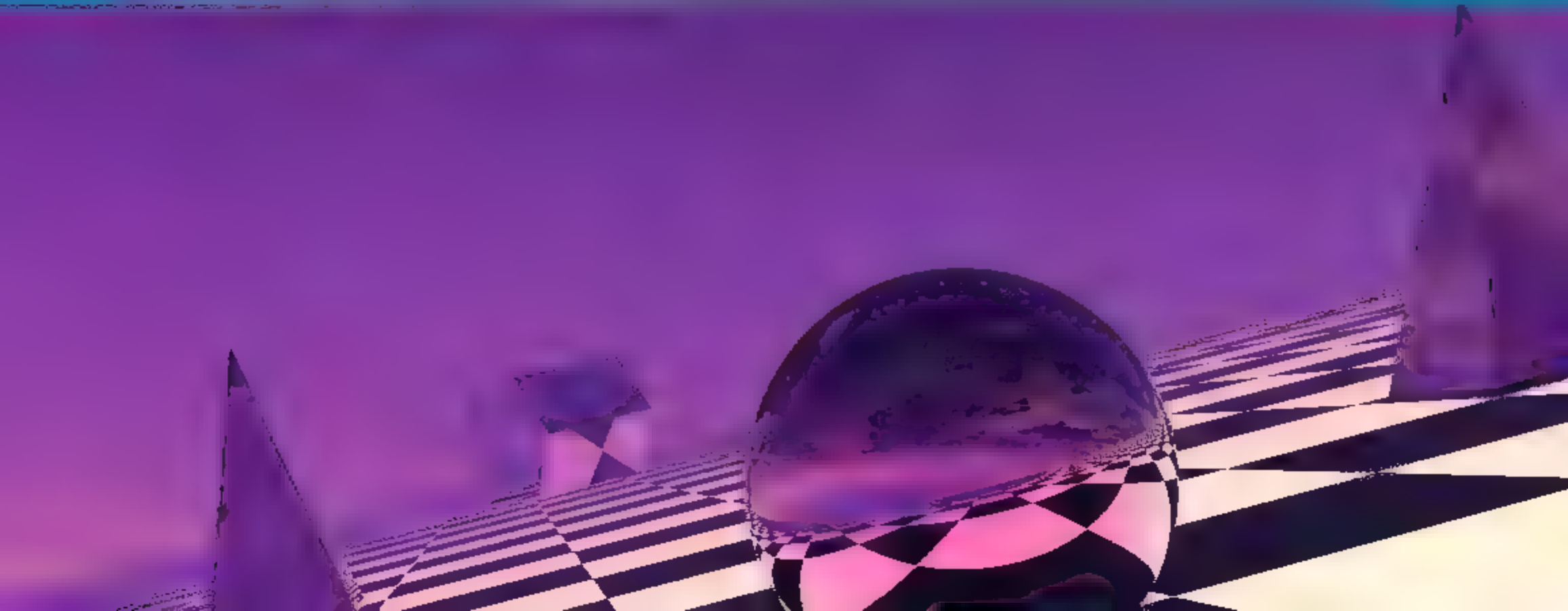
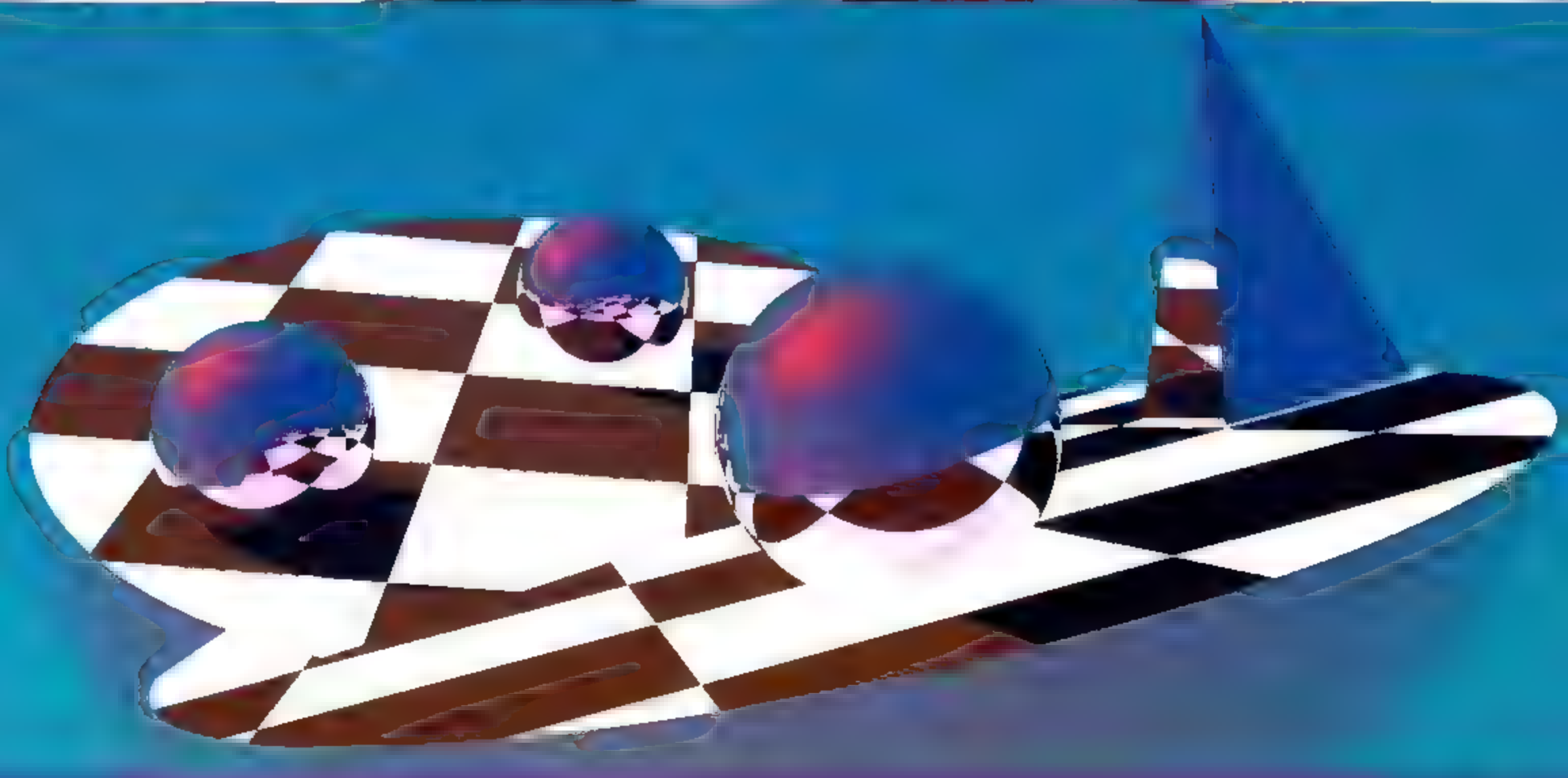
Soundscapes

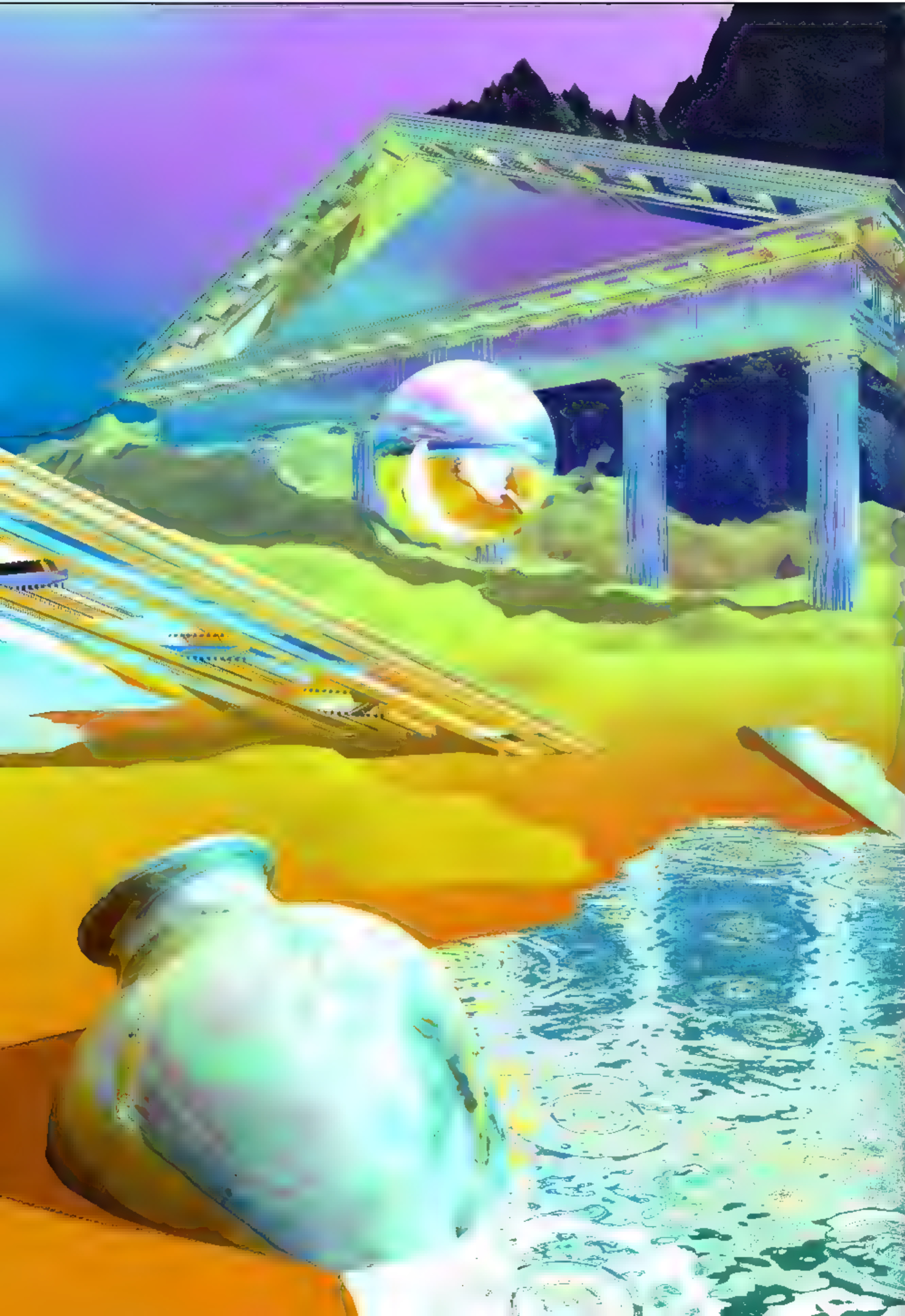


You know, they say every copy of *Super Mario 64* is personalized. I'm sure you've heard them say it, too. Across the internet and thousands of brains inspecting their fuzzy N64-era memories for paranormal oddities, you've heard it. But do you *believe it*? No, trust me: no one joins the faithful overnight. Personalized game cartridges are the granddaddy of them all: the cloaked and pressurized Marianas Trench beneath the *Super Mario 64* Iceberg. This variant of the popular "tip of the iceberg" meme documents *Super Mario 64* rumors, creepypastas, and some outright fabrications, but it follows its template by getting more sinister and claustrophobic the deeper you go.

Sure, many are aware of "parallel universes" and King Bomb-Omb's dud of a revival, but it's only once you explore the rabbit hole that is the July 29th, 1995 build that your journey down the iceberg grows too momentous—and you eventually find yourself truly believing in Wet-Dry World's negative emotional aura, the insidious Wario Apparition, and the indisputable fact that everyone's *Super Mario 64* cartridge contains an intelligent AI that tweaks the game's layout in response to player behavior. After all, have you ever played someone else's copy and felt weirdly unwelcome? I've even heard the game's best speedrunners owe their success to an umbilical symbiosis with the intelligence they've nurtured.

deliriously...daniel
WRITER





Zero れい

zer0rei.com





The Darkest Timeline:

How to

[Not]

In August 2019, I attended 100% Electronicon. After an amazing weekend of meeting new old friends, the scene felt so much closer and brighter than when I first discovered it. As I packed up, sorting out my new tapes and everything in the aftermath, I found a small flash drive, with black electrical tape wrapped around its body. I checked with the team to no avail. I kept it by my desk, just in case someone forgot about it. With no throwaway machine at home, I didn't want to plug it in, just in case.

A few months later, after Electronicon, vaporwave Twitter was talking about this exact same flash drive. Apparently, a handful of these drives were also found at this event. I replied that I had one of these, from "con 1." Soon after, christt shared that he was handed one as well, back at the con 1 tape swap event.

Escape

from Tragedy

In the

Digital Age

He then shared a short video where he plugged it into his "three-dollar flea market computer" to test it out. Windows explorer came up and... empty. Another Twitter user, @BittenBagel, checked his for hidden files and found that there was definitely something there.

In short order, a Discord server was formed and the two moderators, DigiTaliTan and window, had their hands full with newcomers and excitement and trying to sort out all the information on this mysterious flash drive.

m	a	k	i		
w	r	i	t	e	r

It's time to make yourself important.

There were eight files on my drive*, of varying sizes, all but one of which were password-protected .rar files named "▼". Participants noticed that the files were all different sizes, which didn't line up with the file type, so they fixed the file extensions. By my count, we found two (three?) passwords, a handful of bizarre/ominous images, and a fairly lengthy audio file that was being picked apart second-by-second for clues. Excitement and curiosity were at a fever pitch. Based on the dates of the files on the drive our operating systems reported, and the dates of a fictional conspiracy message board we discovered, there appeared to be some shady government experiment going on in the year 2058. We found some ominous logs during our discovery and began referring to this whole thing as "Thundercloud." It all seemed based on an ambiguous tragedy this future of humanity had experienced. As we continued to dig deeper, we were happy to have stumbled upon what may be the first "vaporwave alternate reality game" (ARG).

After an unfortunate turn of events (the creators blame themselves), the ARG had to be shut down. There were a couple of new breadcrumbs tossed out there in an attempt to revive interest months later, but none took. I wanted to sit down and comb through the audio file, to look for anything that would bring that excitement back, but I never made the time. None of us did. And with that, I suppose you could say, Thundercloud died. Given what I have learned, that might be for the best.



Fast forward to now: (summer, 2020). The world is in the throes of a pandemic. Hypercapitalism and racial injustice are at the forefront of our minds. The leader of the free world is a polarizing egomaniac. Though it now seems to be a lifetime ago, it was not even half a year back that the vaporwave community came together to share their collective joy for this feeling of escapism and nostalgia. I'm willing to bet there were many transformative or, at least, transportive experiences had at those events, a lifetime ago. And here we are. Vaporwave, and the escape it provides, was made for today.

1995

Worlds Inc. launched a virtual reality-based chat program, simply titled worlds.com. It was here you could meet up with people from all over the globe, build your own literal virtual world, your own "digital escape," and share it with others. You could form bonds, relationships, and explore everything this early 3D chat service had to offer, all from the comfort of your own home computer and dial-up internet connection. The social aspect is what made this escape worth it. Worlds.com tapped into one of the core aspects of social media: what good is an experience if you can't share it with others? I fell instantly in love with the sheer quirkiness of worlds.com. This was peak '90s internet.

It was here that I met with the creative force (and no, we're not telling!) behind "Thundercloud."

M: I honestly don't know where to begin. I guess, how did you come to create this whole thing?

TC: A lot of the central themes are things we've been thinking about for a long time, and they arguably overlap with certain concepts found in some vaporwave art and sometimes elements explored in dreampunk style music releases. Digital escapism, hauntology, the transportive effect of abstract nostalgia. A terrifying narrative centered on the idea of "lost futures," and the feeling of different timelines creeping into our own. All of this despite the nonrepresentational blurry collective barriers we seem to use to separate imaginary timelines of humanity from one another and our own. We did a lot of research to ground the story of the ARG. For the foundation of the ARG, we took many terrifying real-world events and extrapolated forward those same concepts into the feeling of the far future. What would they be shouting back at us right now? We won't spoil anything here – but one could also look at the government sanctioned experiments done in the '70s to draw similar conclusions of what these could have looked like in the future. How real & terrifying projects like MK Ultra could very well be revived in our lifetime in a much more modern and terrifying way. The timeline of events in this ARG match up with expected advancements in quantum computing technology and the massive unforeseen complications of its availability we can't fully grasp today. When you combine clandestine secret projects to control & modify human consciousness with imperfect assimilations in quantum computing artificial intelligence, there's no other event that can arrive but the Thundercloud Tragedy.

M: There is definitely a heavy cyberpunk feel to the whole ARG. I forget how exactly we got to finding one of the first "bug report chat logs" but it was great world-building which seemed to be between employees of some organization fixing a software issue. The best part about it was that it felt close enough to reality that it was easy to suspend disbelief. Once we saw something referred to as "Thundercloud" in the fictional social forum at the start, that's what we all began to call it. Was that the intended name of the project?

TC: We referred to it as <REDACTED>, or more casually, "The Thundercloud Tragedy," because that's really what it is. The tragedy itself being a catastrophic event after humanity chose digital consciousness over their own corporeal reality. In this world, by which we mean both this actual world and the world of "the ARG," we are perhaps among the darkest timelines of humanity. And it is because of that, that people in our lifetime will make the decision to completely modify their consciousness, to leave this physical world behind in mind, and remain inside of their own digital escape.

M: There are a number of touchpoints we could look at here – things like *The Matrix*, *Ready Player One*, *Black Mirror*'s "San Junipero".

TC: Yes, those deal with people spending time in an alternate reality, an alternate state. In *Ready Player One*, people choose to spend a lot of time in the Oasis. It's a willing choice, they are aware of it, able to exit when they'd like to. In "San Junipero," when you look at it—watch it a second time—it's a really sad story, honestly, particularly the ending which pretends to be a happy one. For *The Matrix*, of course, most people are unaware. Thundercloud is different in the fact that we're looking at a different timeline of humanity, dealing with a catastrophic event on progress in trying to achieve the "San Junipero" situation. We know this because somehow this information is "seeping" its digital information into ours. And the flash drives that everyone found at the Electronicon events are part of how this all works. The data is truly holy: it comes from an entirely different reality than ours. How that came to be, sadly, might not be discovered. We know though.

M: What do you mean by that?

TC: Well, if you look at how "different timeline" narratives are handled in most fiction, it always seems to deal in time travel, or other rather silly options or explanations. Given how bad things are

getting, discussions of "alternate or lost timelines" will start to enter mainstream media (or rather the general zeitgeist). We're seeing this right now, often in jest: "this is the worst timeline." But how would you prove the existence of another timeline? How could this other timeline have figured out a way to communicate with us? We fully believe the way that information will be able to reach across timelines (or at least through a linear temporal movement) is digitally. In our world it's called "digital temporal seepage." That is non-fiction, truth. There is a reason the flash drives all looked like that.

M: To sidetrack a bit: the flash drives. So those contained a lot of information, most of which remains locked behind passwords we never found. There were two sort of big moments we reached: one, we believed there was a physical item located near Elsewhere in Brooklyn; and two, a pretty long audio file that a handful of participants were analyzing.

TC: The group was very close to solving many of the pieces, at some points just a Google search away! And that's right, there is something located near Elsewhere in Brooklyn**, you just didn't find the exact item you should have been looking out for. There are four physical items out there on Earth, in our real world. And as to the audio file... that is actually a "virtual field recording," taken completely inside of a human consciousness — more specifically: a victim within the early events of the Thundercloud Tragedy. The voice you heard, sounding like an omnipotent announcement in the space the recording explores, was the artificial intelligence in control of this person's consciousness. It's likely aware it was being recorded too!

M: Yeah, it sounded like someone walking around a mall or something. Why would someone have an AI in their "digital space," like that?

TC: The whole process to reach the point of true digital escapism, where people choose to fully delete their active consciousness and transcend fully to the digital realm, is going to be messy and horrific. In our world, we believe there will be no world peace, no chance for a utopian society... unless it exists digitally, and not at the control of humans. People will realize the only way to reach this utopia is in the digital space, a consciousness augmentation with computing power unimaginable today. Importantly, however, this type of progress is going to be dark; it's going to be ugly, and there will be horrific tragic events the likes of which we cannot grasp how they will manifest. It will start with a very primitive, crude process. People will die not by physical defects and imperfections in their mind or body causing complications, but by errors in the way we "hijack" and impress onto the human state of internal sentience. The victims of this progress, of experimentation to understand what works and what doesn't, they will see unimaginable terrors, and experience the most abstract forms of hell before (hopefully) brain death.

M: There's definitely enough going on right now in the world that it's easy to see things progressing to a point where people consider digital escapism as the only solution, which is a scary thought.

TC: Not only that, think about what we talked about before: quantum computing. These god-machines will become unimaginably powerful, within our lifetime. Now, if right alongside these machines, you also have a group of insanely wealthy people, with unimaginable levels of private influence and power, who have everything they could possibly want in this world... Would they not also explore the concept of immortality? Wouldn't these god machines be the first place you'd look to in order to experiment with this approach? Do they have a moral obligation to do so?

M: I'm not so sure about that.

TC: So, we have things getting to this point in this fictional timeline, after this tragedy, and people choosing to permanently augment their singular consciousness with an unknowingly imperfect form of singularity. But, what about a shadow corporation that is doing this outside of the public eye? What is their goal?

M: This gets back to the AI in the field recording?

TC: Yes. Say there's a corporation doing this, beta testing immortality through the means of a digital control of human sentience. How would you debug this? How do you investigate issues and improve a system that deals with an unprecedented hijack of human consciousness? But more scarily, what happens when the public finds out? What happens when they also discover things haven't gone flawlessly in this pursuit for the final advancement of mankind?

What happens when an AI with complete ascendancy can steer the "collective consciousness" into accepting this or, even worse, forgetting about these horrific events? People are social creatures. Look at how social media has changed communication, the way we think or consume information. Think about how many events in the past decade have been buried to vague distant memories. "Memory holed" is an expression we've seen. Some of these concepts are explored in the initial piece of narrative on the drive, the "table".

Changing topics, sadly to achieve a "digital utopia," you will need an AI to ultimately "build" it, control it, and improve it. It cannot be done primarily through human intervention. However, these imperfect attempts will likely be empty, shared with no one else but the willing (or unwilling subject) and this imperfect AI. And what if, since you have left your body behind, there's no way to "unplug?"

M: You're trapped.

TC: Exactly. And this is what the participants of the ARG are charged to prevent. Someone wants us to figure out how to prevent all of this from ever happening. Or at least stare back into the reflection on the screen and decide if this is the best option for humanity.

M: It's scary how close to reality all of this could be.

TC: Within our lifetimes, we will see some of this come true. Maybe not this precisely, but these are true horrors we will need to approach with our arms opened wide to embrace the final form of digital escapism.

2020

M: I still have the flash drive from Electronicon!

TC: Ah, you have one without the extra file we added for Con 2. You and anyone else could still solve it.*** Everything you need is on the drive, or could be found through exploratory means, searching online, etc. Although some treasures you'd find in the real world may not still be there because of how much time has passed, the irony isn't lost on us.

M: Maybe someday I'll dig back into it, but I really don't have some of the technical ability to crack a lot of that stuff. Anything else you would like to add before logging off?

TC: Regarding the narrative, no. Just as David Lynch knew that revealing the killer of Laura Palmer would kill Twin Peaks, that same concept applies here. The more you show, rather than have others instead experience, the less interesting and engaging it becomes. Regarding the ARG itself, first off, sorry to anyone if you found a weird flash drive in your belongings and freaked out! That was not our intent. We would like to thank the moderators of the Discord – DigiTaliTan and window – for being understanding when we contacted them about shutting it down. Breaking the wall and stopping the momentum was the last thing we wanted to do, but it had to be done given the turn of events, which we blame ourselves for. We also wanted to thank the participants for being equally respectful of these boundaries. There are still so many unanswered questions we hope to one day explore in different mediums and methods. We just hope it can be done before this fiction gets too close to non-fiction.

1. NEW THUNDERCLOUD LEAK?

2.

3. OP 08/03/58 9T7XGKVQ

4.

5. Hey -ns. I found an interesting document that seems legit (Thundercloud suspicions confirmed?). I know this is old r- to r- of you, but a lot of people on l- really got closure. The trail went cold. Plus I'm assuming enough -ns passed that we'll get -nOOBs interested.

6.

7. [PARA REDACTED]

8.

9. Thundercloud table?

10.

11. Anonymous 08/03/58 PX4UGUQG

12. File: lawn-mower-4.jpg (44 KB, 640x361)

13. 44 KB

14.

15. @@9T7XGKVQ (OP)

16. >"Thundercloud Tragedy"

17. >not "Lawnmower Man Massacre"

18. shame, also definitely not going to that link

19.

20. Anonymous 08/03/58 WE3EAVXK

21. File: thinking.png (115 KB, 680x521)

22. 115 KB

23.

24. You know what's crazy? The people connected to the machine are likely experiencing a constant state of NDE. Can you even imagine what that's like? Anyone know if there's been other events like this under the radar?

25.

26. Anonymous 08/03/58 WY53A32Q

27.

28. Sorry OP, not again. Reading into this Thundercloud shit like a decade ago put me into a bad mindstate*TM. I feel like the world around me feels far more simulated than it did before I dived deep into the Thundercloud rabbit hole.

29. How do I fix this? I don't even care if we're in a simulation, just let it be less obvious to me.

30.

31. Anonymous 08/03/58 CD3ZQ57H

32.

33. @@WY53A32Q

34. disengage from most consumer media for a few years and watch a dramatic change in life.

35.

36. Anonymous 08/03/58 M838NR6B

37.

38. @@9T7XGKVQ (OP)

39.

40. Ah Thundercloud... what an interesting way to go. Politicians, Feds, and law enforcement would actually talk about it for like a solid year. Can't really prove it, but I find the -ns testimony more convincing than anything else (as in we haven't heard a single bit of information regarding the victims - interesting huh?). It's lovely how this was the most obvious -ns of mass sudden information suppression. And the videos of prosecutors talking about how they thought there was a coverup have very few views as well, couple hundred to a couple thousand. Much dumber conspiracies have more interest than this and it saddens my heart.

41.

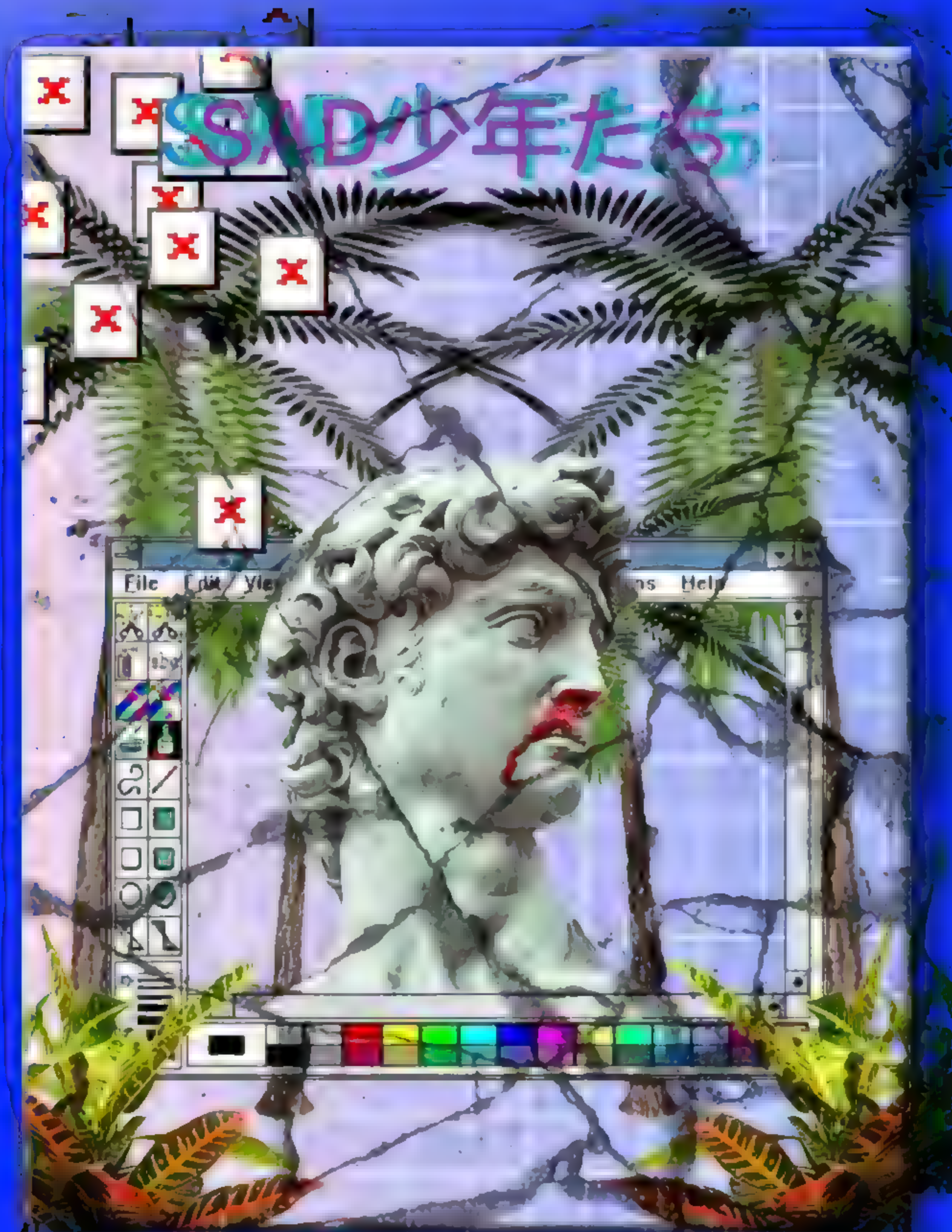
I logged off. As I prepared to shut down, closing tabs about racial injustice, Elon Musk, the coronavirus, Donald Trump, and other local news, it felt like there was a storm coming. I logged into worlds.com to get away for a bit.

*drives found at Electronicon 2 had one additional file; contents undisclosed

**exact coordinates of this, and two other items, are known as of 7/20/20

***contact made if you have a Thundercloud server invite (maybe we can still solve it!)







Feature

So You're Trying to Find

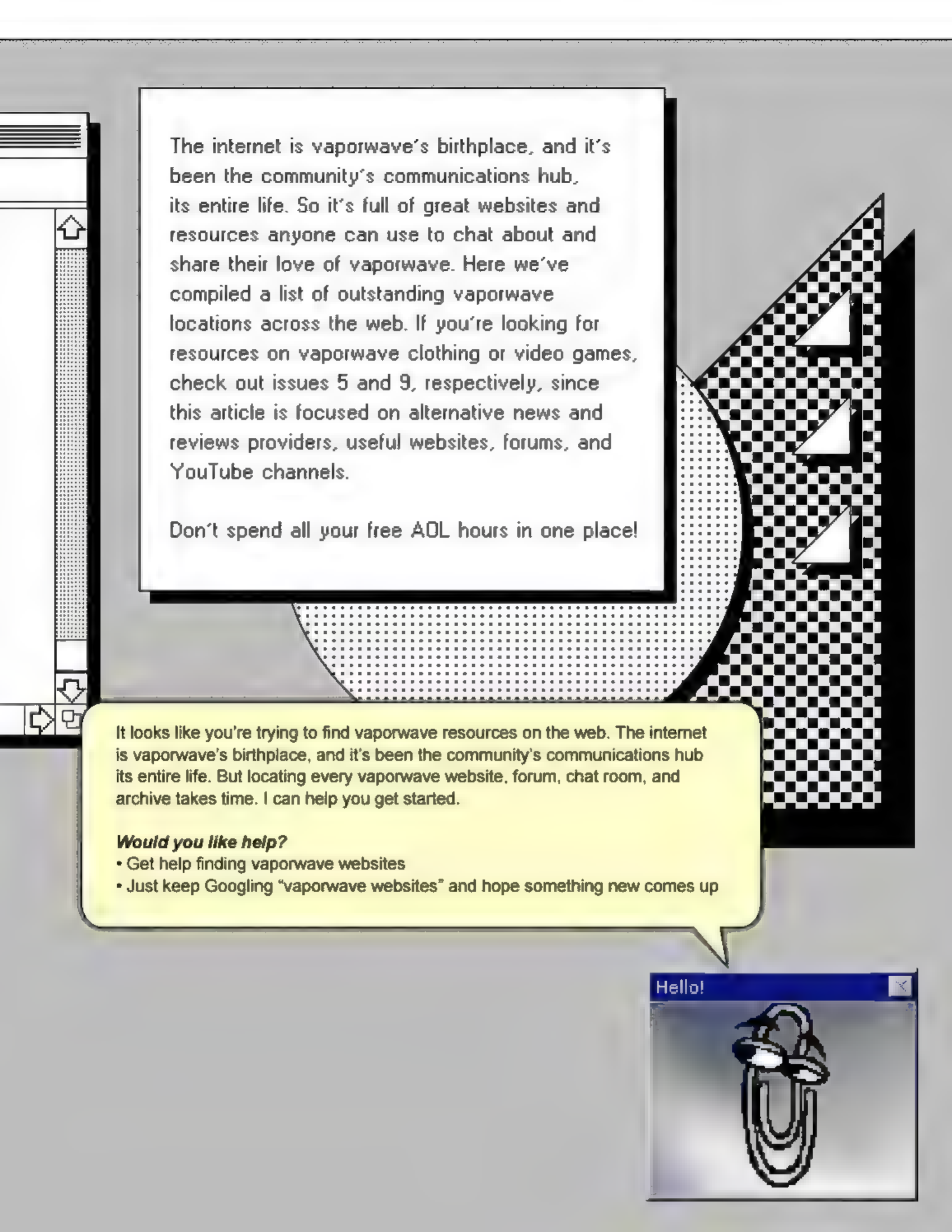
VAPORWAVE?



Writers		
2 Items	232k in disk	167k available
 MRTT	 gbacos92	



Trash



The internet is vaporwave's birthplace, and it's been the community's communications hub, its entire life. So it's full of great websites and resources anyone can use to chat about and share their love of vaporwave. Here we've compiled a list of outstanding vaporwave locations across the web. If you're looking for resources on vaporwave clothing or video games, check out issues 5 and 9, respectively, since this article is focused on alternative news and reviews providers, useful websites, forums, and YouTube channels.

Don't spend all your free AOL hours in one place!

It looks like you're trying to find vaporwave resources on the web. The internet is vaporwave's birthplace, and it's been the community's communications hub its entire life. But locating every vaporwave website, forum, chat room, and archive takes time. I can help you get started.

Would you like help?

- Get help finding vaporwave websites
- Just keep Googling "vaporwave websites" and hope something new comes up

Hello!



Agora Road



Private Suite: Do you miss that sweet, sweet '90s internet feel? Wait no longer, because you can now experience it again with Agora Road and the Macintosh Cafe, a website duo that could have only been made by the vaporgods themselves. Relive the days of the Wild Wild Web, without fear that you'll accidentally install another virus while looking for Nirvana MP3s.

The Agora Road is your path to the rest of the vaporworld. With origins in the dark web and hacker culture, it is a website and forum curated to become the hub of vaporwave activity. It consists of two parts: the home page and the forum. The main page, Agora Road, is a one-stop shop with articles by many anonymous writers including the founder themselves.

Founder of Agora Road: Agora Road first started out as a personal blog of mine. It was a place where I would "shine the light" and share stuff I found personally interesting. I posted stuff such as "hard to find" old ASCII files and E-Zines from different underground internet communities from the early internet days, interesting conspiracy theories, and I would review .onion websites from the dark web that I found. Then as I discovered the vaporwave community, I went on to make album reviews as well! And a funny side note, when I first shared my album reviews on the vaporwave subreddit, they got really good reception but then users started browsing around that got really scared of the dark web stuff. However, I eventually took the dark web stuff off of the Agora Road website because I was getting really weird requests and it became a problem for me.

I would say if you want to dive in the past of the world of old internet subcultures, read about interesting topics, read album reviews & interviews from your favorite vaporwave artists, then Agora Road is the place to be. But if you want to experience vaporwave music, be a part of the vaporwave community, and learn how to make music from other vaporwave enthusiasts like you, then stop by the Macintosh Cafe.

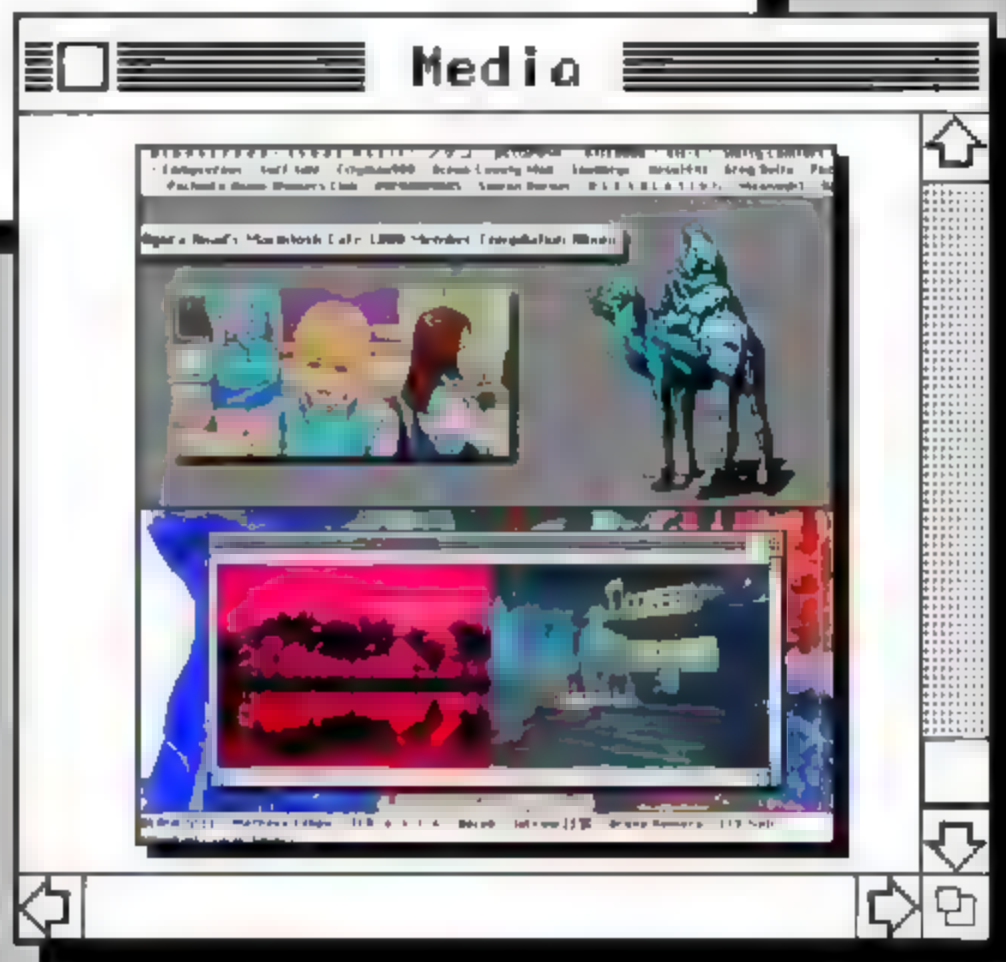
The other half of Agora Road is the Macintosh Cafe. It is a forum dedicated to vaporwave, synthwave, and future funk. It's got all you could ask for in a forum dedicated to the vaporwave aesthetic, with many different boards to browse and background music courtesy of Nightwave Plaza (more on that later!). It also lets you choose from various themes to fit your preferred aesthetic.



Founder of Agora Road: Agora Road's Macintosh Cafe was created because I felt like the community was too scattered around all over the place such as in sites like Twitter, Discord, Reddit, 4chan, and the community didn't have a place of its own. I know there were other vaporwave forums that had started before me but those quickly died out in a couple of months. I wanted to make the Macintosh Cafe as a hub for the community to share their music, art, ideas and make friends with people that have the same interests as them. As a side note I came up with the name Macintosh Cafe based on internet cafes in real life and I modeled the design of the forum as the GUI of a classic Macintosh OS the best way I could. What people need to understand is that Agora Road shouldn't be viewed as a person, but as a virtual destination that can only be accessed on the web. That's why I will stay anonymous and try to be as impartial as I can as an admin of the forum.



Anonymous user Agora started Agora Road nearly two years ago and has been devotedly working on it as a passion project since then. The Macintosh Cafe user base has been growing steadily and recently reached one thousand members. In honor of the milestone, Agora Road members made a commemorative album boasting 29 tracks from different members of the forum, which you can check out here: [Agora Road](#)



News Sources



Music's The Hang Up

Music's The Hang Up, also known as MTHU, is one of the best places to go for constant vaporwave news, reviews, and interviews. User KITE0080 created the project as a way to equalize his once depressed state, hoping that having something to build and put effort into would help him. He decided to utilize his vaporwave passion to create a news outlet where the focus is on constant, up-to-date news and releases instead of on large, bimonthly publications like you see in other vaporwave magazines. KITE0080 has managed the site—a blog featuring both written and visual pieces—since January 2018. He has been able to travel the world and experience vaporwave at its finest before moving into San Francisco temporarily due to the lockdown.

MTHU releases through many different media. They have a YouTube channel that is updated weekly with new vapornews, albums, and physical drops that you won't want to miss. There are interviews with many various outstanding vaporwave figures, like Porter Vong, Gulf Audio Company, and Mr. Wax. You can find a full, uncut interview with Ronny from Vaporspace STL in the Podcast page of the website too. They have also branched out into the real world with physical releases of their own.

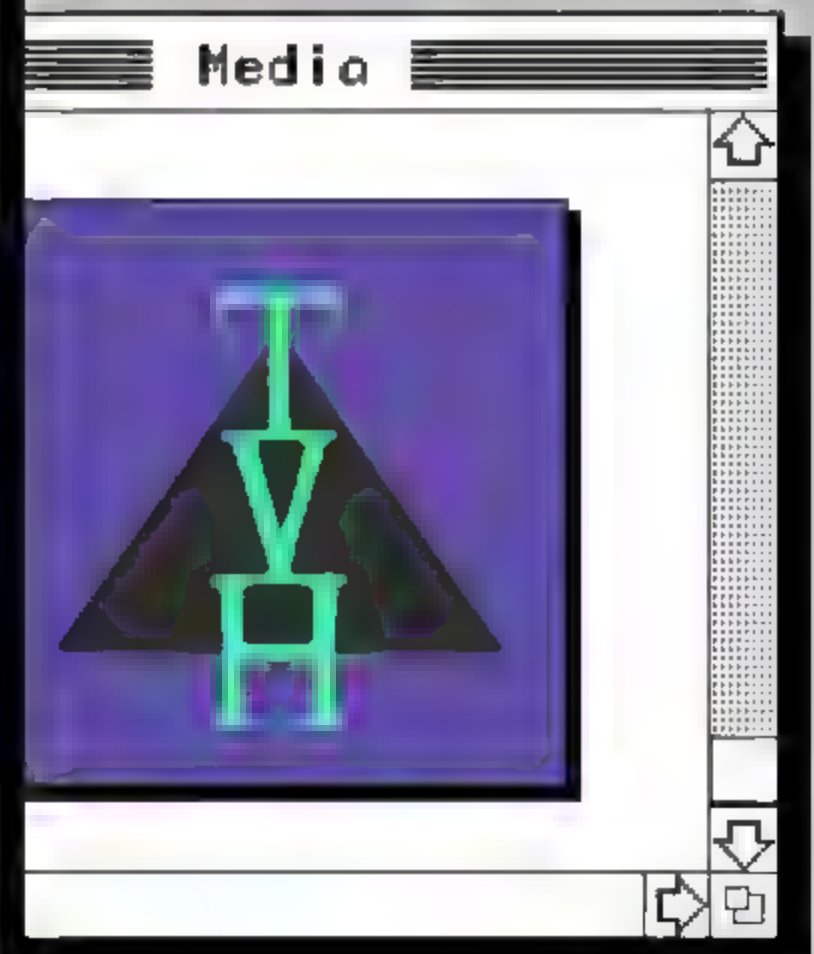
A Book of Visual Signalwave is a coffee table book of aesthetics with photographs from news broadcasts, commercials and other televised media curated by KITE0080. I was lucky enough to get my hands on a copy for about five minutes before shipping it off to a friend for Christmas and I can attest to the quality of its sheer beauty. It was exciting turning each page, waiting to find out what gorgeous aesthetics would be waiting for me next, never once being let down. KITE0080 is a very ambitious man, though, so the list doesn't end here. *Visual Signals: (ISSUE ZERO)* is the first magazine released to the world by MTHU. In his own words, it is a platform for anyone to express any form of culture, design or media in a printed form.



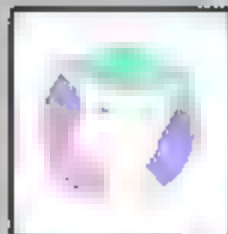
The Virtual Haus

With its template laid out in its first release, *The Virtual Haus* lets you know exactly what you can expect: it's the magazine "for the Morbid, the Curious, and the Morbidly Curious." A delightfully eerie publication, it focuses on bringing light to different corners of the internet and different styles of glitch art. While not exclusively focused on vaporwave, it's nevertheless an extremely aesthetic read, full of fascinating conspiracy theories and spooky tales. It's still a young project (only two issues are released so far), but we can expect more great content in the future.

The Virtual Haus doesn't tie itself down. While the first issue follows its loose blueprints, the second issue focuses entirely on how to stay safe during protests. It brings to the reader useful information on what to avoid and what to do should a situation turn sour. The magazine hops all over the place, but what keeps it together is its strong sense of curiosity for the unknown—the lesser explored portions of the internet, haunting tales passed down through the generations, art forms mostly undiscovered. *The Virtual Haus* is a must-have for anyone interested in the mysterious, fascinated by the unfound, or mesmerized by the magical.



Useful Sites



Nightwave Plaza

Nightwave Plaza is a humble 24/7 vaporwave radio station that will turn you on to many vaporwave artists and albums you may never have heard. Tune in to hear the best music the vaporwave community has to offer. Playlists offer a wide variety of sounds and feels, branching into many subgenres and styles. Be prepared to be taken on an emotional roller coaster as the station switches from upbeat future funk to slow, relaxing mallsoft. And unlike pop radio, the music never gets old! Contact information is also included in the About section, so why not send in a demo or album of your own for a shot at getting your music played?

Nightwave Plaza also allows listeners to customize their experience by offering several aesthetic backgrounds (more than eighty GIFs and still images—ranging from anime beaches to lonely nights by the TV—to set the mood). Want vaporwave radio on-the-go? Nightwave Plaza is also available in the Google Play store for Android users. But if you prefer the web or are on iOS, you can still use the website (the app and website are functionally the same, although the app is better suited for mobile use). It's a great station to tune into whether you just want to hear a few minutes of those sweet, sweet low fidelity tracks or want to set the mood of your whole aesthetic evening.



Lucid Archives

Of course, sometimes searching through a site like Bandcamp can be a little sanitary. Sometimes you want something a bit more visually driven. This is where Lucid Archives comes into play. A visually motivated timeline of many of the key vaporwave releases, Lucid Archives is brilliant, especially if your music philosophy is "how cool is the album art?"

While not necessarily as exhaustive or comprehensive as some of its peers, Lucid Archive is able to hone in on a very specific presentation style, which helps to make navigating the sight a little more fun than it might be elsewhere. Of particular note are the interactive guides which are easily the most useful feature offered on the site. Though low in number, the ones that are available are extremely helpful, especially the one with a pretty exhaustive vaporwave subgenre guide. Elsewhere on the site, a pretty impressive list of organizing filters, as well as a search function, help to make Lucid Archive a perfect searching supplement to any of your vaporwave needs.



Vapor Archives

Vapor Archives is a hidden gem. A platform dedicated to chronicling the movement from its genesis all the way to the present, it's an invaluable resource. Spread across multiple Twitter accounts and just about every other platform you can dream up, it's a herculean undertaking. Rather heartbreaking, though, is the fact that as of this writing, the site is in a bit of a station-keeping mode, having stopped issuing updates. The possibility of a return hasn't been ruled out, and the resources that are already out there are expected to remain there, but further updates may be harder to come by.

Even so, it's still a massively useful source of tracing the scene, and seeing (practically in real time) the birth and subsequent explosions of new genres. A virtually infinite number of releases and artists are present across the various platforms that Vapor Archives occupy. If you're interested in the early years of vaporwave, you'd be hard pressed to find a better source!

Vapor Archives has inspired other dedicated catalogs of vaporwave history, too. Sites such as vaporwave.wiki and the previously mentioned Lucid Archive have cropped up in the ensuing months and years. Having backups can't hurt, right?

Bandcamp

Of course, one of the most useful tools for discovering new vaporwave to tickle your fancy is— and pretty much always has been— Bandcamp. One of the epicenters of the entire movement, Bandcamp has robust search features that allow you to dig through individual subgenres or search for extensive backlogs of artists you may have just discovered. You can even check the albums purchased by people with tastes similar to yours. This flexible platform is, by and large, the place to go for physical vapor-goodies. It makes Bandcamp a must for any aspiring vaporwave fan.

YouTube

While YouTube may be a “well, duh” resource, its usefulness can’t be overstated. Arguably the biggest, most recognizable name in vaporwave news on YouTube would be Pad Chennington who offers a little of everything: unboxing, news, deep dives into little-explored corners of the scene, numbered lists, you name it.



Artzie Music

Artzie Music is another fun channel worth your time. While by no means comprehensive, Artzie Music offers up an incredible collection of future funk music videos and visualizers that bring the genre to life in a way few other places on the internet have been able to manage. Even if you just pop in once in a while, this is a stop that is well worth your time.



Daydream Deluxe

New to the scene is Daydream Deluxe, an up-and-coming vaporwave channel that focuses on future funk. It is still a very young channel, but it has quickly gained hundreds of subscribers in its first two months. With interesting vaporwave and future funk historical and unboxing videos released every couple weeks, Daydream Deluxe will probably become another staple in the vaporwave YouTube scene soon.

Outro

While this is by no means a comprehensive list, it is a great starting point. Of course, everyone's journey through vaporwave will be different, but that's no reason not to get started on the right foot. It'd be hard to imagine navigating the wonderful world of vaporwave without some of these resources.



OWNING PIXELS

what our neopets taught us

written by **deliriously...daniel & Sheep**
designed by **Crystal Eternal**

neopets...

Does that word take you back? Does it flood your mind with memories of pound surfing for a cool new pet, or perhaps a time when you were desperately learning CSS and HTML in an effort to beautify your pet pages? Or maybe it just reminds you of how you resorted to skills like restocking shops, entering and winning competitions, or just investing in the stock market to reach a financial goal?

It was 1997 when Neopets (*then stylized NeoPets*) exploded onto the scene. For kids who couldn't have a pet at home, it was a creative and empowering way to have a cool critter of their own. It wasn't just a pet site, though; Neopets was its own entire universe. It had diverse, unique lands; its own history; guides on how to pronounce names of prominent characters; and even its own economy, which helped it to become one of the stickiest websites in the early 2000s.

Untitled - Notepad

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"Stickiness" refers to the amount of time a user stays on a website, engaging with it or with other users who also utilize it.

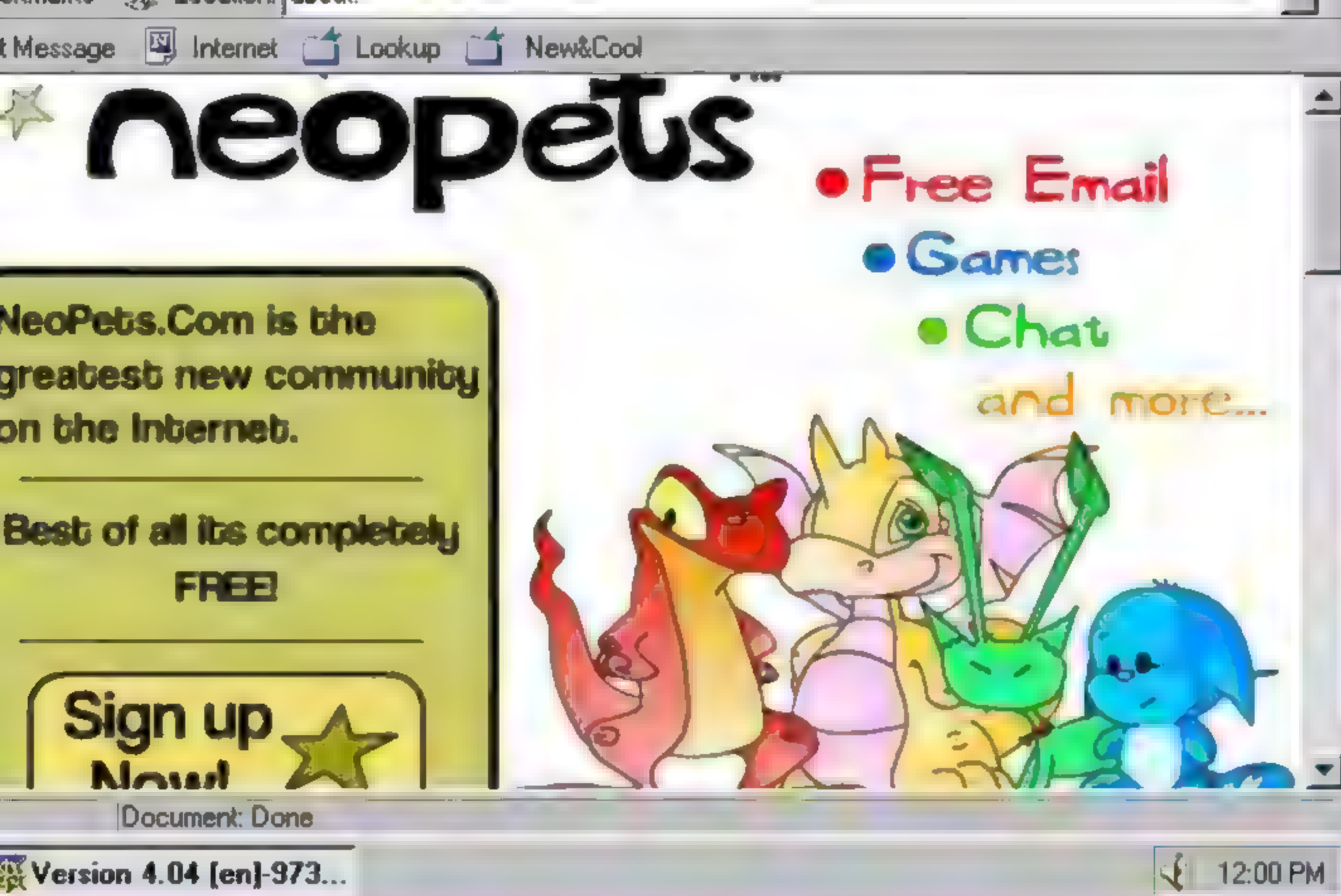
The site has a functioning economy, complete with its own stock market; users can invest their hard-earned Neopoints into shares of certain Neopian stocks in hopes of playing a long, patient game (or sometimes a rapid, instantly gratifying one) in an effort to net a huge return on a small investment. Users can then take their returns from the exchange and various other games and deposit them into a bank account at the National Neopian where they can collect interest each day.

Players can watch not only their percent interest increase at certain mile markers, but enjoy the fruits of their hard labor by watching the amount in the bank continuously rising. Playing the stock market is a great way to learn about how a real economy works; while Neopets stocks seem to be based on random number generation that works on a dedicated change-over schedule, it drives home the importance of what an investment is and why being patient with it is important for seeing a good return on that investment.



The economy functions around the Neopoint, the site's version of currency. Players generate Neopoints by playing games, investing in stocks and the casual trading or reselling of items in user-owned, as well as NPC-owned, shops. With a user-driven economy, the site also teaches young users about supply and demand and how to budget, save and manage financial goals.

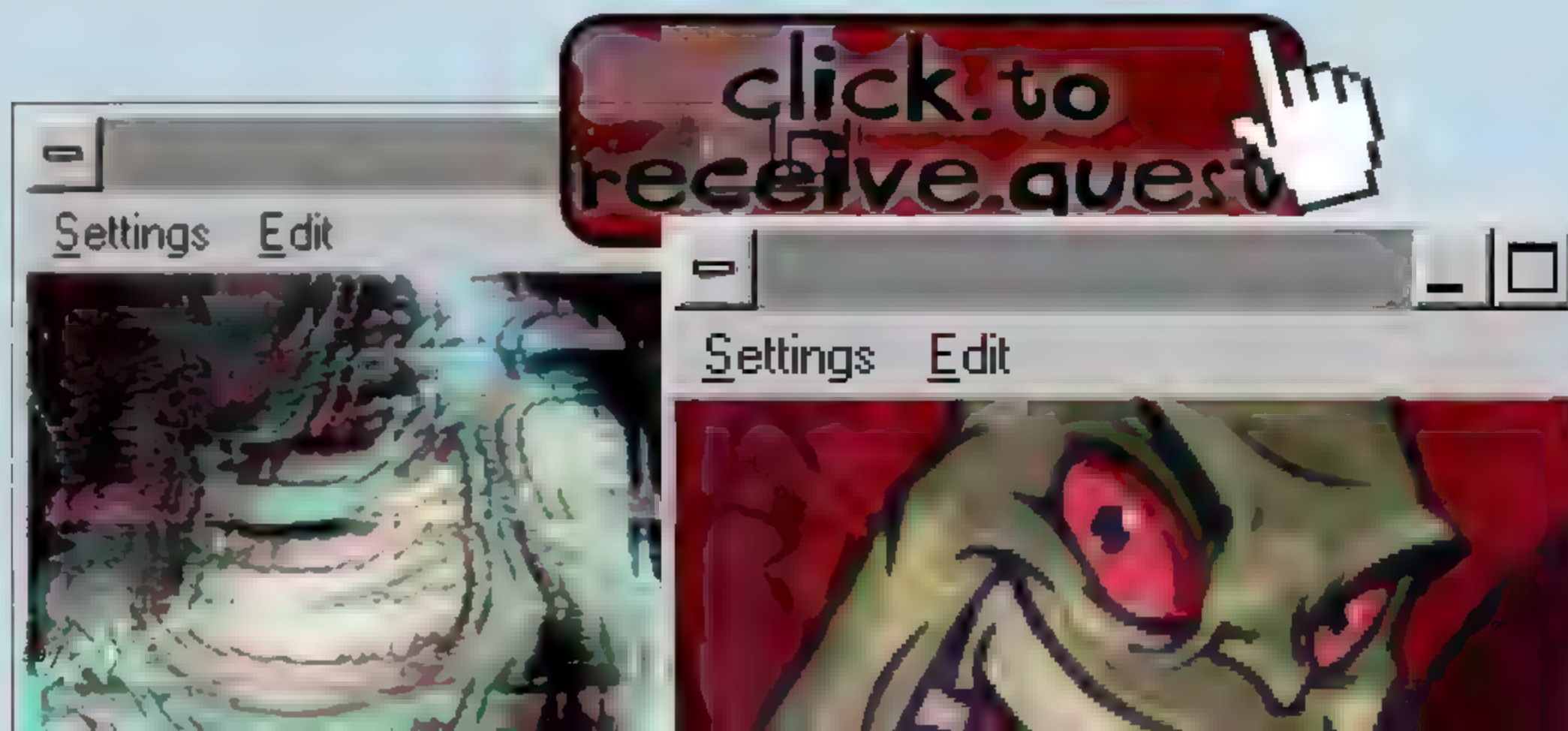




ASK YOUR PARENTS BEFORE GOING ONLINE

Beyond practical lessons on gambling, investing or appraising, Neopets also offered its youngest users ample opportunities to develop a certain softer skill, one crucial for surviving the web and real world alike.

Trust. And a discerning sense of it, at that.





During the web's comparative youth—Neopets' heyday—parents were much more trusting of the internet. As mass online communication was a new thing, it wasn't immediately understood just how much trouble a kid could get into online.

Granted, Neopets was (and is) safer, more secure and sanitized than most other sites, so overt threats like predators or mass profanity aren't worth worrying about. Rather, parents of this era may have trusted Neopets a little too much when it came to wholesomeness for its own sake. Since Neopets has always been free to play, it's not shocking that they rely heavily on advertisements and product placement to stay afloat. But, back when the very concept of Neopia was innovative, slick attempts at "advertainment" (ads worked into games) could get away with a lot more. Now, advertising ethics textbooks note how, during the early 2000s, there was a crackdown on predatory marketing aimed at children.

McDonald's was forced to euthanize half its mascots, and the psychology behind cereal character designs also came under scrutiny. As Neopets had their fingers in the same pies—quite literally, between Happy Meal toys and Neopets Islandberry Crunch cereal—critics began to question whether it should be permissible to seamlessly integrate new promotions into an online universe kids have already immersed themselves in and which parents have trusted to not warp their children subliminally.



ALL HAIL SLOTH - GLORIOUS OVERLORD OF ALL THINGS



You have not been worshiping your overlord enough. How do you wish to pay tribute?

Work Harder

Grovel

Edgar Allan Poe Tribute

Naturally, this only got worse when it became widely known that Doug Dohring (investor and former CEO of Neopets Inc.), after funding the game for founders Adam Powell and Donna Williams, was running the company using Org Board, a combative and internally cutthroat business model pioneered by Church of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard. Though Powell and Williams successfully fought to keep Scientology propaganda out of the game, the infighting and ostracization within their work culture created a tense atmosphere. Thankfully, Neopets Inc. was sold to Viacom in 2005, severing the Neopian Xweetok from Xenu, but during the first five years of the new millennium, it remains true that countless children, with parental approval, sank countless hours into a virtual landscape without knowing about the zealots and morally grey marketers who pulled the strings.



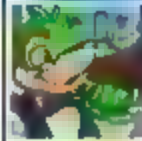
General - Notepad

File Edit Search Help

It's one thing to trust Neopets.com with your age, data, faith and beloved virtual livelihood, but foraging into the site's message boards requires a new level of truth and scrutiny. As with most forums, you can never be sure if the person behind the avatar is exactly who they say they are.

Yet, given how specifically juvenile most of the threads were on less-Neopets-specific boards like 'Newbies' and 'Fan Clubs' before today's comparative degree of online awareness, it wasn't hard to believe that most regulars were fellow kids.

Other boards, like the sincerely invested Roleplaying and the ever-emo-inclined 'Evil Things and Monster Sightings,' could feel more intimidating and adolescent. But ultimately, for every trade scammer or trickster who baited you into viewing Lemon Party at the age of 13 (still sour about that one), you'd work together with plenty of fellow avatar hunters or meet lifelong guild-mates.



» The Official Neopets Team Message Board

This board is where the Neopets Team will post updates about Meepit attacks, technical problems, event issues, and any other announcements we want to make, because we can. :P



» Site Events

Want to chat about current site events? Discuss the latest goings on here.



» Art

Share your art, tips and tricks for creating art, and ask for advice for submitting entries to art gallery, beauty contest, pet spotlight etc. (Remember, you can only advertise or start topics regarding YOUR OWN Beauty Contest entry!)



» Avatars/NeoSignatures

Want to show off your avatar or need help getting secret ones? How about NeoHTML and NeoSig help? This is the place to discuss avatars and sigs! NOTE: Item pools are a scam and are not allowed!



» Battledome

Find a battle partner! Get weapon information. Anything and everything Battledome is in here.



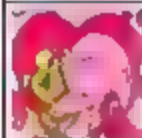
» Customisation

Post here to discuss the latest trends in fashion, style and home decor. You don't want your Neopet and Neohome looking so last season.



» Exploring Neopia

Discuss your favourite Neopian lands and discover new ones!



» Fan Clubs

Have a favourite pet? Petpet? Item? Discuss it here!

Though anonymous interplay between innocent, over-trusting young users may sound like a bad idea, the Neopets Boards and the resulting NeoFriendships were often the site's most rewarding aspect. These online friends were precursors to today's Twitter mutuals, though looking back now on an archive of abandoned usernames and unreachable old allies is sure to tighten one's heart while warming it.

And it is this sort of thin, troubling sense of loss that defined, at least for me, the emotional impact of Neopets. For, just as you trusted the site not to wrong you, so too did Neopets trust you with the responsibility of owning a virtual pet—one with a functioning metabolism. Outside of some eerie random events and a certain terrifying Pterodactyl, Neopets was rarely frightening, but seeing your pet sallow and starving for the first time instantly made this fictional pet maintenance more earnest. Pokémon can be left poisoned while the game's off, but a Neopet is a daily commitment.

water_jade14

Species: Usul

Colour: Red

Gender: —

Age: 213 days

Level: -1

Health: 6 / 6

Mood: happy

Hunger: famished

Strength: frail

Defence: very heavy

Move: fast

Intelligence: average



water_jade14 is hungry! There are many places to get food, but you could try the Food Shop in Neopia Central.

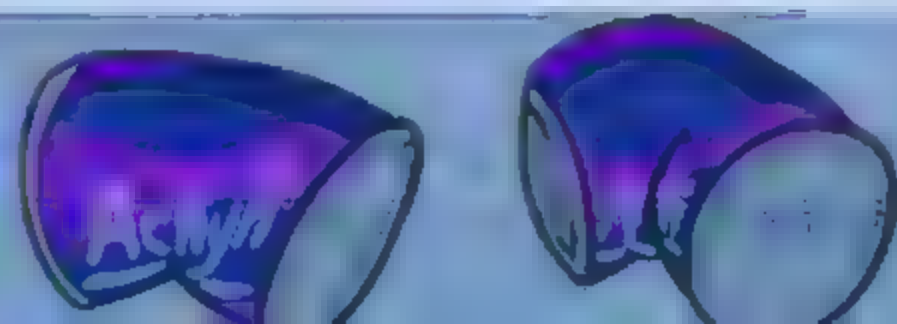




And as a result, there is one place in Neopia far scarier than the rest. Not the Haunted Woods, nor the Lost City of Geraptiku, but the Neopian Pound. While “pound surfing” and refreshing for hours in search of rare pets can quickly desensitize someone to the Pound, Neopets makes sure to keep the place extremely foreboding for the site’s youngest users who might be quick to abandon pets they adopted without means to care for. Between constant warnings and the very presence of Dr. Death the Techo, the Neopian Pound feels malevolently alien compared to the rest of the site.

Neopets claims that pets get adopted quickly from the pound where only around 90 were estimated to be in the pool at a time. But even if that’s true, it’s hard not to picture countless stock Neopets infinitely interned on a sad, dusty server somewhere.

If Neopets could be said to have vaporware, it’d be them: those faceless, abandoned pets with names like charliechia45692—programmed for adventure, should they ever be released.





Neo No More...

Eventually, the bubble bursts for sites like this, and quality and content start to decline. Trends and fads come and go in cycles; what was once tacky is now the in-demand thing. In the case of Neopets and other virtual pet sites, it quickly became difficult to stay competitive with the rise of Facebook and social media in general. Couple this with Neopets as a property shifting between corporate owners, and what results is a slow drought of creativity and functionality. The site still exists with active users, but as the ideas and enthusiasm of those closest to Neopets' founding spark are lost through years-long games of conference-call telephone, parts of the site no longer work or can't cope with the death of Flash, while the wonder and connectivity—that once inspired youthful Internet pioneers to grow with it—is consumed like a Giant Omelette by the profit hungry.



Some Goodbyes and Almost-Weather Reminders

Written by: Brian Duran-Fuentes

Renato woke up from a dream of wasps. To his right, on top of the bedside table, there stood an empty crystal tumbler with a white ring of dry milk at the bottom. The tumbler was big but thin, its color was translucent violet, and it had a small crack at the edge. Just last night, it had fallen slowly on the floor, producing a sound like Gregorian chants of bereavement spiraling down the gutter. Nothing had leaked through such a small crack, so Renato didn't think much about it. To his left, a corpse lay under the sheets, its face covered with small crystal fragments.

He got off the bed and, being unable to find his left slipper, walked barefoot to his closet. There was plenty of space -- just a few boxes and clean sheets on the shelves. His clothes barely occupied half the rack. Renato was choosing what to wear that day when he noticed something to his right -- another corpse was standing inside his closet. This corpse was far paler and wore a certain expression of heartbroken confusion at a shirt it held in front of its marble-white eyes, like some morbid mannequin at the mall. Renato touched the shirt and examined it attentively. It was a black shirt, size large, with an unlicensed N64 logo printed on the front. Renato couldn't find anything wrong with it, so he took the shirt and headed to the bathroom.

The water from the shower was never hot enough. Renato rinsed off in haste before the water temperature fell any further. Suddenly, the water stagnated in the tub until it reached his ankles. Once he was done, Renato stuck his hand down the drain and, quite annoyed, dragged out the pestilent remains of skin that

habitually congested the pipes of the house.

As he returned to his room, it became difficult for him to open the door. Renato hadn't noticed it but there was another corpse on the floor near the bed. The body was in a high degree of decomposition so, as he turned the knob and pushed, the door glitched into a bus stop billboard promoting the Sonic the Hedgehog movie. He certainly wanted to pick up the remains but, as he was holding a towel and the clothes he had just taken off in his hands, Renato preferred to kick the corpse under the bed where it would represent a smaller nuisance. The billboard could wait until the evening. It was right then that Renato noticed that, even though he had been living on his own for quite some time, he stuck to his habit of dressing in the bathroom.

In the kitchen, Renato wanted to prepare some coffee. He looked in every cabinet for a cup but couldn't find any; they were all dirty. He tried to pull one from the bottom of the sink but there was an enormous skeleton on top of all the dishes. Renato had to take out all the bones and set them aside in order to get to the cup he needed. It took him a long time to wash it since several teeth had remained strongly attached to its surface. Afterwards, he put the skeleton back in the sink which he filled with water and some bleach.

Renato sat at the dining table and started to read a series of clickbait articles on his laptop as his coffee cooled down a bit. As the browser loaded a dozen old tabs, a pop music video became looped by accident as several copies of the same YouTube link uttered:

Zephyr in the Zephyr in the sky at night
Zephyr in the I wonder sky at night Do my
tears sky wonder Do my tears sink beneath
the sun at night of mourning Do my tears sink
mourning mourning sink beneath the sun.



Having nothing else to do, Renato drank his coffee with all the calm in the world. After a while, he felt an itch on his forehead. Renato scratched himself but found no relief. He looked upwards and noticed another corpse stuck in the ceiling. A string of blood coming from its open chest leaked slowly down his forehead. Renato looked around and found more and more corpses scattered around the house. There were bodies on the floor holding all sorts of different objects: price tag scanner guns, clothes hangers, takeout menus and train tickets; there were several bodies sitting in the living room wearing extravagant and colorful masks and several more leaning on the desk with their index fingers tucked in between the pages of closed books. There were blood-soaked bodies rolling down the stairs and a

gleaming pyramid of polished skulls towered over the dining table with slots where the salt and pepper shakers could be set in a satisfying and convenient manner. Hands and feet fell out of the kitchen drawers; lungs fluttered around the lamps; heads rolled up and down almost every wall; eyes blinked, embedded in the surfaces of every piece of furniture; and intestinal spider webs were inhabited by hearts hungering after flying lymph nodes. With his shirt completely drenched in blood, Renato looked up again at the corpse in the ceiling and shared its terrible smile.

The next morning, Renato found a corpse in the living room with its face disfigured by the stings of hundreds of wasps.

General - Notepad

File Edit Search Help

2:35 Part 1

By Tails_155

Network

AQUARIUM - Notepad

File Edit Search Help

You are deep within the thick glass walls of a walk-through aquarium tunnel. Your watch shows **2:35PM**. The sun shows through the glass walls and the sight is a blue so electric the floor even seems to glow. The shimmering of the waves distorting the sunlight above and its ripples on the ground below form an endless loop of gently shifting shades. A light chill lingers in the recycled air, though not strong enough for you to need the fleece tied around your hips. You hear the distant sound of other patrons conversing, happily enjoying the sharks and rays through the glass. The scent is salt water and a moderately potent cleaner, but not an overbearing one, something with lemon or another perfume, perhaps.

You take a sip of sweet, very icy soda, and approach some stairs. You realize you shouldn't be able to, but you walk up the stairs, directly into the water, its surface hovering at the top of the steps, undulating undisturbed by gravity. Within the water, you can breathe perfectly. Amid a carpet of coral, soft and smooth to the touch, you come face to face with a porpoise who offers you her dorsal fin, and you are whisked away through the water, the deep, the blue.

anxiety attack - Notepad

File Edit Search Help

You can't sleep. Your heart is heavy and pounding. An acidic taste wells in the back of your throat. Anxiety swells your chest, aching. A storm is passing; lightning flashes. The clock on your desk is blinking: **2:35AM**. Your laptop battery has died. The air through the open window smells of petrichor and diesel exhaust. A bus leaving the stop outside emits a shrill hiss. The air is chilly; your fan is not helping.

You pull your comforter tight over your body like a cloak and shut off the fan before slumping back on your mattress. The only sounds are the trickling rain and the occasional hellacious blasts of thunder as lightning leaves instantaneous silhouettes on the wall. The warmth almost makes you feel like you are floating. You are still lightheaded and your heart still pounds. But at least you aren't in a cold sweat anymore, just a warm one. With the fan off and your laptop dead, the silence between occasional rumbling and flickers of lightning makes rest all too difficult.

魚市場 - Notepad

File Edit Search Help

It's 2:35AM. Some game's mellow aquatic level's music is playing on what appears to be cassette, or some older medium. As you walk down the streets of a Japanese fish market--lit by buzzing yellowed fluorescent tubes and traditional paper lanterns--smelling (obviously) of fish but also asphalt and diesel exhaust, the audio seems to skip and, while your perception of the audio is continuous, your motion seems to move in sync. When it replays a section, you appear back where you were when that first played, and repeat your actions. When the music skips forward, you are thrust to where you have yet to be. The air feels salty and humid, and the smell of the fish is strong enough you can taste the oils on your tongue.

A sudden change in the music brings you to a park overlooking several colorful LED boards of advertisements, across a busy street -- a blazing spectrum of vibrant colors, even at this hour. The music returns to the previous song, and you return to the fish market. As you reach for a sample of shrimp tempura, you wake up.

going down - Notepad

File Edit Search Help

A harsh yet homey tone rings and the elevator opens. You enter the doors from your seemingly infinite hallway--endless dim incandescent lights struggle to glow a soft orange above a musty, once-modern carpet of simple geometry, almost dizzying in its repetition, only the occasional flicker of a faltering filament to give any variation, any sense of reality. You stand idly in the transportation chamber, a room oddly comfortable for what could easily become a prison with the wrong luck. The walls are standard stainless steel, the floor imitation marble and diorite, triangles of white and black coated in a hard, glossy epoxy. The smell isn't foreign: generic industrial cleaners, ammonia veiled by eucalyptus and pine. The tone beeps once more as the box reaches the ground floor. The doors open to -- the outside. At least it feels like the outside. A street to your front, a small plaza forward to your left. Generic city wildlife scrabbles for sustenance among the litter and within trash cans, but there is no sun, no moon. Looking straight upward, you see towers on all four street corners rising so high that natural light is a narrow cross, mere microns wide. It is not dark, however. The roads are lit by buzzing streetlights, drowned out by the sounds of traffic and chirping birds.

Despite this colossal cityscape, everything feels empty. You see none of the speculative people who would be feeding the birds. The cars all appear empty, even as they drive themselves to their supposed destinations. Various solid towers of light advertise this and that: cyan and magenta cans of some soda you know all too well; pale pink backdrops to a jewelry store you've been to once or twice; black and white formal glyphs in a language you don't recognize yet understand sells a watch of some expensive complication. The air tastes artificial, yet banal. The plastic palms don't generate fresh air like in other places. Breathing in, your nose senses diesel and asphalt as an empty bus rumbles past. You don't have time to dawdle. You have places to be. It's already 2:35PM. You are late.

S FIGHT !!!

Medusa has appeared!

Medusa has appeared!

medusa

talk to medusa

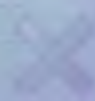
TT

medusa has appeared!



TAK MAI SHI

BOSS FIGHT III



The battle has ended.

Summary Fought

Get Ready

<C:\PATREON SUBSCRIBERS.exe>

_ctrl_alt_esc	Arda Erdeniz	Curtis Lee	Evan Looney
.Reflected.	Ascetique	Cyrekt	Eventual Infinity
[phone]	AtlasJackson	Damien G	Fabian Amels
@StachyDJ	Audora	Dan Citrin	Fae Moonbeam
Ace Vallega	Austin C Byrd	Dan Goubert	Faith Mealing
Adam Bednarczyk	Automata89	Dan Ribaud	Francisco Garza
Adam Houghtaling	Azyzl	Daniel Pesch	frzi
Adeptus Minor	Barrett Gamber	Danny Price	Garrett Barfield
Adrian LaTrace	Barry Donnelly	Darkfez Futuretro	Garrett Holladay
Adversarial Light	Benjamin Lehman	DATA GIRL	George Apav
Agora Road	hub yang	David Finkel	George Waked
Alan Westfall	bocajacob	David Russell	Gremlin Jacky
Albert Aparicio	Brandon L Brown	Daydream Deluxe	Groovy Kaiju
Aldrea Orcinae	Brandon Sylver	Derek Pnwer	Holly
Alejandro Allepuz	Brian	Diego	holoJamz
Alejandro Grande	Brian Duran-Fuentes	Diego Valencia	Hunter Mason
Alek	Brian Rick	Deast	Iain Bricknall
Alex Clarke	Brittany Reid	dj	IDNTT
Alex Cofe	Bryan Behrenshausen	Donovan Preston	ikaros alpha
Alex Deloach	Brycen Itzku	doomdonation	Indy Advant
Alex Koenig	CA\$TA	Doug	INFEKT
Alex Toporowicz	Chiefahleaf	dutchtide	Jack Officer
Alexander Cohen	Chris	Dylan Hyman	jackson s burke
Alexandria Gregory	Chris Paz	DAXXMAXX	Jacob Bernard
Allison Kuperman	Chris Twombly	Electronic Gray	jakcreature
Andi	christtt	Elizabeth Siegel	Jake Deven
Andrew	Churroman	Elliott	Jake Rzeppa
Andrew Cooper	Cian Byrne	Emil Perez	James Coates
Andrew Lehman	Cody England	Emily Krisher	James T Jenkins
Angel McVey	Colin Fraunfelder	Emkay	James Webster
Angelos	CollectNirvana	Emma Frascchetti	Jarred Allison
Ani Vikram	Comp u S e r v e へようこそ	Emmanuel Vargas	Jason Foerman
Anna Eichenauer	Connor	Eric Roy	Jason VanSlycke
Anthony Cuebas	Connor Sheehan	Erik Domnizky	Jay Brenner
Anthony Hunter	Croix B	ErzuliDantor	Jeff Cardinal
Arbor	Crybaby	Ethan Dumayas	Jerrel

Jesse Boyles
Jimmie Lara
Joao gilberto
Joao Kendall
Joe Bentley
Joe Cauthon
John Philip Halverson
John Rakita
Jordan Nielsen
Joseph Petrone
Josh
Josh Boyer
Joshua Cloninger
Jules Vadura
Juraj Crneković
Justin Wong
Kamran Thandy
Katherine
Katherine L Bryant
Kayla S Muckelroy
Keenan Anderson
Kevin Hein
Kodak
Konn
Kristopher
Kristopher Kelly
Kushal Naik
Kyle Creasey
Large Gut
Lars Rys
Laura Watton (PinkAppleJam)
Laury Woollery
Leftist Legume
Leo Lampinen
Liam
Louis Draper
Louis Mehlin
Luis Rodriguez
Luis Sandoval
Luke John Lozano
Luke Wasserman
Lydia Blezard
Mar Nagatani
Marc Fáfmir
Marc Junker
Marcus

Mason
Mason Whitted
Mat
Matt Kiefer
Matt Legge
Matthew Villagran
Mattias Teye
mattt
Matumbo
Matwed Drums
Mauricio Rams
Max Lange
Mercedez Clewis
Michael Barankovich
Michael LeBlanc
Michael McGrath
Millyficent
Minus Tyler
Mister Lonely
Mohn Jadden
Moritz Hohmeier
Moses Zavala
Myles O'Neill
N3kkun
nano神社 (OAO)
Naoya Matsumoto
Nate Harrison
Nathan Cooper
Nathan Ruiz
nekutheNihilist
Nick Benefield
Nick Perry
Nick Sgourakis
no156
OmnilimbO
Opela
Pablo Vazquez
Patric Bates
Patrick Davis
Paulo Tellez
PEBAR
Pedro L. Gonzalez
Pete Zimmer
phaeder
Phil Cimon
Phoebe Hartley

Piper Horn
Pizza Hotline
POLYGLOT
Q
Rauru Zetto
Richard
Richard Rayaprol
Richard Shields
riley
Robert Henry
Ronny Louvre
Ryan Buckman
Ryan Doan
Ryland Behrens
Sam
Sean Robinson
Seffi Starshine
Seth Lobdell
Seth Startix
Shawn Przybilla
Sheriff Santiago
Shire
Sierra W
Skye Newcom
SkyleSmile
SowReaper
Spencer Gustafson
Steve Fish
Steve Miller
Theo Farnum
thesplenda of dirt
Tim Doherty
Tim Harlow
Timothy Quinlan
Tommy Paquette Blackburn
trancepyre
Travis Hawkes
Tremendm Labs
ultra_ghost
varrok
VCRNOT
Virtual Beach Club
VprDotWve
Wesley Knight
William Bottini
William Crook

Xavier Vélez
Yourdudesnicker
yung txtx
Zac Webb
Zach Marshall
Zak Hokanson
Zak Slade
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Sin Gaia

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THANK YOU_
FOR MAKING_
THIS_
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Welcome



Start

Welcome